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HELIODORUS

AN ETHIOPIAN STORY

TRANSLATED BY
J. R. MORGAN

Introduction

To a reader about to embark on the *Aithiopika*[1] the most obvious fact about it is its length. This is a work on an altogether grander scale than any other extant Greek novel, a work whose structure and execution express an ambition to be considered at the highest level.

The narrative opens with a band of Egyptian bandits peering over a hilltop in the Nile Delta. Through their eyes and with their bewilderment we see a macabre and memorable tableau: a deserted ship, the remains of a banquet, a host of dead bodies. What has happened? What does it mean? You must read the story yourself to find the answers, but in one sense it means this: the author has thought hard about the weaknesses of the traditional romance plot, which consists, in essence, of a falling in love, a loss of felicity, and its eventual recovery after a series of ordeals. There are two unsatisfactory features about this. The adventures that interrupt felicity give the author his greatest opportunity to excite and entertain his reader, but they can easily degenerate into an infinitely extendable concatenation of organically unconnected and randomly arranged episodes. Secondly, at the end of all their adventures hero and heroine find themselves back where they started; ultimately nothing has changed. Heliodoros has tackled these weaknesses by starting his narration in the middle of the story, with the result that the reader is not just

1. The work is known variously as the *Aithiopika* (*Ethiopica*) (*Ethiopian Story*), as *The Story of Theagenes and Charikleia*, and as *Charikleia*.

passively bombarded with a series of sensational happenings but is drawn into a hermeneutic quest to account for what he already knows. Part of the riddle concerns the heroine's identity, and the solution to that question gives the plot a new sense of ending. For this couple there is a goal, and life *will* be different at the end of the journey. The plot has acquired unity, direction, complexity.

The opening paragraph alerts us also to another feature of this novel. The narrator knows what the scene on the beach means, but he is not telling. The reader is compelled to share the ignorance of the bandits; their eyes are our eyes. So throughout the novel the narrator stays very much in the background. The truth emerges dramatically from the characters, and their learning is our learning. This quality in its turn entails another of the *Aithiopika*'s greatest delights: its sheer convolution and intricacy. As connections emerge, seemingly of their own accord, over long spans of text, as plot and subplot slowly mesh together, as subsidiary narrators successively play with the partial knowledge of their audience, we are invited to admire the virtuoso skill of the self-concealing author who has engineered the whole complex mechanism.

The same opening paragraph raises yet another point. For all its theatricality the tableau is set precisely in a real place: at the Heracleotic mouth of the Nile, whose reality is secured by being viewed from a perspective outside the narrative frame ("that *men call* the Heracleotic"). Heliodoros has gone to great pains to anchor his story to reality, or at least to Greco-Roman perceptions of reality. Real places are brought to life by authentic details. Even racial characteristics conform to reality as the author aligns himself with traditions of crafty Egyptians, degenerate Persians, pious Ethiopians, and noble Greeks. In a subtler way that opening paragraph also gives us a temporal setting: the scene is close to the site of Alexandria, but there is no mention of the city in the text. We are in a period before its foundation, and this hint is confirmed by later indications of a date in the late sixth or early fifth century B.C. The dramatic date remains imprecise, and it has to be said that there are anachronisms (some of which are indicated in the notes), but the impression at least is conveyed that the story took place in real time and in real places. Verisimilitude is enhanced by certain narratorial mannerisms, such as admitting limitations of knowledge or inability to determine causes or motives. For all the self-conscious artistry, we are being asked to assume that the story is in some sense "true."

The *Aithiopika* is also a very religious, or rather religiose, text. References to supernatural agencies of various kinds abound: gods, the god, the powers above, the divine, spirits, chance, fate, destiny, and so on. And at the end we are left with the satisfying feeling that everything has been accomplished under the guidance of Providence. But in a work of fiction Providence is only Plot in disguise. I cannot find any consistency

in the attribution of events to nonhuman agencies and am inclined to think the whole divine apparatus a literary device to give the plot a sense of direction, purpose, and eventual closure, rather than a statement of belief intended to instruct its readers in the ways of god. It is striking that virtually the whole plot is motivated sufficiently at a human level. Thus, although the opening tableau is initially ascribed to the stage management of the deity, we are eventually given an entirely rational account of it. I have not, therefore, been overscrupulous about maintaining a one-to-one equivalence of Greek and English vocabulary in naming the divine: rhetoric matters more than precision.

In particular, it has often been suggested that the *Aithiopika* was written in praise of the sun-god of Heliodoros's hometown, Emesa in Syria—a particularly tempting idea in view of the author's statement in his colophon that he was a descendant of the sun. But this is an identification, not a credo, and it is very hard either to find a role for the sun-god in the economy of the plot or to trace any connection between the theology and rather strict morality of the narrative and those of the cult of the sun, whether in its orgiastic form as introduced to Rome by the Syrian emperor Elagabalus (reigned A.D. 218–22) or in its more universalized and sanitized form as instituted by Aurelian in A.D. 274.

The *Aithiopika* is as ambitious in its texture and diction as in its construction. It is, firstly, a very literary piece of writing, permeated by allusions to earlier literature, especially the Homeric epics and Euripidean tragedy. Some of these allusions I have indicated in the notes, but often they consist of a characteristic word or turn of phrase whose distinctiveness cannot be translated. The author's penchant for the theater makes itself felt also in comparisons to dramatic techniques and equipment. This is a double ploy: an admission of the work's theatricality, and simultaneously a claim to a realism outside theatrical convention, like a character in a film saying, "If this were a movie, I wouldn't believe it."

Heliodoros wrote wonderful Greek. To try to translate it is a humbling experience. Much of its effect is lost in a noninflected language like English, which lack Greek's ability to hold together a periodic structure with case forms and combine them into an intricate pattern of balance and rhyme. The style is florid and artificial, but exuberant and alive, employed with a zest and love of words and the games that can be played with them. The vocabulary is wide and highly nuanced. I discovered at an early stage that to translate Heliodoros literally is not to translate him at all. Sometimes one has to overtranslate simply to convey everything that is there in the Greek. Some attempt has to be made to reproduce the jingles, puns, and wordplays, even at the cost of insignificant inaccuracy of detail. So, for instance, at 3.10, I have used a pun on the word *spirit(s)* that anachronistically attributes the drinking of distilled liquor to the Greeks, but better that than to lose the punning banter so essential to the

passage. Nevertheless, I am only too aware that this translation is a pastel version of the stained-glass colors of the original. I only hope that the reader can follow what is going on and can get an occasional sense, as through a glass, darkly, of the music and rhetoric of the set pieces and the flashes of sardonic wit in the narrative.

Although Heliodoros emerges as a very distinct personality, paradoxically given his recessive stance, we know next to nothing about him. A report by the ecclesiastical historian Sokrates says that he was a Christian bishop at Trikka in Thessaly who enforced celibacy on his clergy; Byzantine historians elaborate the story by telling how he was forced to choose between disowning the novel of his youth and resigning his see: romantically, he chose the latter. It is difficult to know how much truth there is in any of this, though attempts to find traces of Christianity in the novel are certainly misguided. We do not even know when it was written. My own inclination is to date it to the fourth century on the strength of similarities between the siege of Syene in the ninth book and the siege of Nisibis by the Parthians in A.D. 350, but others would like to put it a hundred years earlier. The *Aithiopika* was a favorite work at Byzantium, made respectable reading by a belief in its author's Christianity, and exerted considerable influence on writers as different as Sidney, Cervantes, and Racine. Although he was once ranked alongside Homer and Virgil, Heliodoros has seemed too artificial, too precious for the taste of more recent centuries. I hope that this translation may persuade modern readers that his novel is more than a historical curiosity.

I have used the Budé text; substantial departures from it are indicated.[2] For the lengthier quotations from Homer I have used the now standard translations of Richmond Lattimore. Heliodoros is an erudite writer; for fuller annotation than was possible in the present volume the reader is referred to the Budé edition, to which I acknowledge my indebtedness. Omissions are indicated by ...

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2. For Books 9 and 10 those who are interested in the text may refer to my discussion in "Noctes Aethiopicae," *Philologus* 127(1983): 87–111.

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AN ETHIOPIAN STORY

Book One

THE SMILE OF DAYBREAK was just beginning to brighten the sky, the sunlight to catch the hilltops, when a group of men in brigand gear peered over the mountain that overlooks the place where the Nile flows into the sea at the mouth that men call the Heracleotic.[1] They stood there for a moment, scanning the expanse of sea beneath them: first they gazed out over the ocean, but as there was nothing sailing there that held out hope of spoil and plunder, their eyes were drawn to the beach nearby. This is what they saw: a merchant ship was riding there, moored by her stern, empty of crew but laden with freight. This much could be surmised even from a distance, for the weight of her cargo forced the water up to the third line of boards on the ship's side. But the beach!—a mass of newly slain bodies, some of them quite dead, others half-alive and still twitching, testimony that the fighting had only just ended. To judge by the signs this had been no proper battle. Amongst the carnage were the miserable remnants of festivities that had come to this unhappy end. There were tables still set with food, and others upset on the ground, held in dead men's hands; in the fray they had served some as weapons, for this had been an impromptu conflict; beneath other tables men had crawled in the vain hope of hiding there. There were wine bowls upturned, and some slipping from the hands that held them; some had been drinking from them, others using them like stones, for the suddenness of the catastrophe had caused objects to be put to strange, new uses and taught men to use drinking vessels as missiles. There they lay, here a man felled by an axe, there another struck down by a stone picked up then and there from the shingly beach; here a man battered to death with a club, there another burned to death with a brand from the fire. Various 1

1. The westernmost of the seven principal mouths of the Nile.

were the forms of their deaths, but most were the victims of arrows and archery. In that small space the deity had contrived an infinitely varied spectacle, defiling wine with blood and unleashing war at the party, combining wining and dying, pouring of drink and spilling of blood, and staging this tragic show for the Egyptian bandits.

They stood on the mountainside like the audience in a theater, unable to comprehend the scene: the vanquished were there, but the victors were nowhere to be seen; the victory was unequivocal, but the spoils had not been taken, and the ship lay there by herself, crewless but otherwise intact, riding peacefully at anchor as if protected by a great force of men. But although they were at a loss to know what it all meant, they still had an eye for plunder and a quick profit. So they cast themselves in the role of victors and set off down the hillside.

2 They had reached a point a short distance from the ship and the bodies when they found themselves confronted by a sight even more inexplicable than what they had seen before. On a rock sat a girl, a creature of such indescribable beauty that one might have taken her for a goddess. Despite her great distress at her plight, she had an air of courage and nobility. On her head she wore a crown of laurel; from her shoulders hung a quiver; her left arm leant on the bow, the hand hanging relaxed at the wrist. She rested the elbow of her other arm on her right thigh, cradling her cheek in her fingers. Her head was bowed, and she gazed steadily at a young man lying at her feet. He was terribly wounded and seemed to be barely conscious, coming round from the verge of death as if from a deep sleep. Even so he had a radiant, manly beauty, and his cheek appeared more gleaming white because of the red streak of blood running down it. His pain made his eyes heavy, but the sight of the girl drew them upwards to her. What forced them to see was that it was her they saw. He gathered his breath and sighed deeply.

"My darling," he whispered, "are you really alive, or were you another victim of the fighting and now cannot bear to be separated from me, even after death? Does even your ghost, your soul, still care what befalls me?"

"It depends on you," replied the girl, "whether I live or die. Do you see this?" She indicated a sword that lay on her knees. "Till now it has been idle, stayed so long as you draw breath."

As she spoke, she leapt up from the rock. Thunderstruck with wonder and terror at the sight, the bandits on the hillside scattered and dived for cover in the undergrowth. When she stood up, she seemed to them larger and more godlike, her weapons rattling at the sudden movement,[2] the gold thread in her robe flashing in the sun, her hair tossing under her

2. An allusion to the description of Apollo descending from Olympos near the beginning of the *Iliad* (1.46–47).

crown like a bacchante's and cascading over her back. They were terrified; but their incomprehension of the scene caused them greater terror than the mere sight of it. Some said she must be a god—the goddess Artemis, or the Isis they worship in those parts;[3] others said she was a priestess possessed by one of the gods and that she was responsible for the carnage before them. That is what they thought, but they did not yet know the truth.

Suddenly, the girl threw herself down onto the young man and embraced him bodily, weeping, kissing him, wiping his face, sobbing, unable to believe that she held him in her arms. When they saw this, the Egyptians began to have second thoughts. "How could a god behave like that?" they said. "How could a divine being kiss a corpse with such passion?" They urged one another to be brave and to go closer and find out the truth. So they pulled themselves together and ran down the hill. When they reached her, the girl was still intent on the young man's wounds. They stood stock-still behind her, too scared to speak or act. Their movements produced a loud noise, and the shadows they cast fell across the girl's eyes; she looked up, saw them, and looked down again, quite unperturbed by the strange color and robberlike appearance of these armed men, quite single-minded in tending the wounded man. So it is that genuine affection and wholehearted love disregard all external pains and pleasures and compel the mind to concentrate thought and vision on one object: the beloved.

The bandits moved round and stood in front of her. They seemed to 3
be on the point of taking some action when the maiden looked up again and saw their dark skins and unkempt faces.

"If you are the ghosts of those who here lie dead,"[4] she said, "you are wrong to trouble us. Most of you died at one another's hands. Those that we slew we slew in self-defense and in retribution for your outrage against chastity. But if you are living men, you lead the life of brigands, it seems. Your appearance is timely. Set us free from the woes that beset us! Kill us and so bring our story to a close!"

But of this tragic outburst they could understand not a word. So they left them there under the strong guard of their own weakness and ran to the ship and began to unload its cargo. There was great quantity and great variety, but they passed over everything except gold, silver, precious stones, and silk, each man taking off as much as he could carry. When they had as much as they wanted—and there was enough to satisfy

3. The bow and quiver suggest Artemis, goddess of hunting and, significantly, chastity; the girl's pose recalls the Egyptian goddess Isis tending the dead body of her husband, Osiris. These associations of divine purity and love would be implicit for an ancient reader in the iconography of the description of the heroine at this her first appearance in the novel.

4. In Greek popular belief at least some types of ghost had black faces.

even a bandit's greed—they laid out their booty on the beach and began to divide it into separate bundles, making their division not according to the value of each item but so that each share was of equal weight. They were going to deal with the young man and woman later.

At that moment a second band of brigands came on the scene, led by two men on horseback. When they caught sight of them, the first band put up no resistance but ran off as fast as they could, empty-handed to avoid pursuit. There were ten of them, and they could see that the newcomers were three times that number. So the young couple was taken prisoner for a second time without yet having been taken prisoner once. Despite their haste to be at the plunder, the brigands stopped for a moment, puzzled and disturbed by the sight that confronted them. They guessed that all the carnage was the work of the first bandits, but when they saw the girl in her strange and splendid attire, disregarding the horrors that beset her as if they did not even exist, totally occupied in treating the young man's wounds and feeling his pain as if it were her own, they were taken aback by her beauty and courage. They wondered too at the wounded man, so tall and handsome he lay there, for he had already recovered a little of his strength, and his face had taken on its usual expression once more.

4 After a while the bandit chief walked up to the girl. He grabbed her and told her to get up and come with him. She could not understand a word he said, but guessed what it was that he was commanding her to do. As she rose to her feet, she also drew up the young man, who clung tightly to her, and, pointing to the sword at her breast, she threatened to kill herself unless the brigands took them both. The chief understood what she meant, partly from her words, but mainly from her gestures. He also hoped to have in the young man, if he lived, a valuable addition to his band. So, dismounting from his horse and making his henchman do the same, he set the prisoners on horseback, and, with a word of command to the others to follow on when they had finished loading the spoils, he set off running on foot beside the horses, supporting his captives whenever either of them was unsteady. There was something remarkable in the sight: the master appeared as a servant; the captor chose to minister to his captives. Thus may nobility of appearance and beauty of countenance vanquish even a brigand heart and triumph over the harshest of natures.

5 They rode along the beach for some four hundred yards, then left the track and headed straight up the mountainside with the sea on their right. After a stiff climb they passed over the crest of the hill and pressed on down towards a lake that lay outspread below them on the other side of the mountain. Its nature was as follows: the Egyptians call the whole area

the Land of Herds;[5] there is a natural bowl into which the floodwater from the Nile pours; thus a lake has formed, immeasurably deep at the center but shallowing off at the edges into a marsh, for as beaches are to seas, so marshes are to lakes. This is the home of the entire bandit community of Egypt, some of them building huts on what little land there is above water, others living on boats that serve them as both transport and dwelling. On these boats their womenfolk work at their weaving; on these boats their children are born. Any child born there is fed at first on its mother's milk, later on fish from the lake dried in the sun. If they see a child trying to crawl, they tie a cord to its ankles just long enough to allow it to reach the edge of the boat or the door of the hut. A strange way to keep children in hand, to tie them by the feet![6]

Many a Herdsman has been born here and reared as I have described, 6
and has come to look upon the lake as his homeland. It affords a secure stronghold for bandits, and so that class of person flocks there. The water encircles the entire settlement like a wall, and instead of a palisade they are protected by the vast quantities of reeds growing in the marsh. By cutting devious and intricately winding paths through the reeds, and so constructing passages that are easy enough for themselves, as they know the way through, but quite impossible for anyone else, they have contrived for themselves an impregnable fastness to safeguard them against any attack.[7] Such, more or less, are the lake and the Herdsmen who live on it.

It was just about sunset when the chief and his men reached the lake. 7
They pulled their young captives down from their horses and began to unload their booty into their boats. Most of the bandits had stayed at home and now began to appear from various parts of the marsh; they ran to welcome their chief, greeting him almost as if he were their king. When they saw the huge quantities of booty and looked upon the girl, whose beauty seemed to exceed that of humankind, they thought that their comrades must have looted a holy place, a temple full of gold; had they carried off the priestess too, they wondered, or was this girl the statue of the goddess, a living statue? Poor fools!

Extolling their chief's excellence at great length, they escorted him to

5. In Greek, *Boukolia*. The marshes of the Nile Delta provided a refuge for brigands and outlaws at all periods. The *Boukoloi*, "Herdsmen," whose life Heliodoros here describes, are attested in several classical sources, rising to particular prominence as a result of their uprising against Roman rule in A.D. 172. There is thus a kernel of fact here, but the Nile Delta bandits are generally part of the romantic furniture of novel plots, and there is no way of telling how authentic Heliodoros's detail is.

6. This and several other details of life on the lake are borrowed from Herodotos's account (5.16) of the lake-dwelling Paionians.

7. Here a long phrase is taken from Demosthenes 21.138 (*Against Meidias*).

his dwelling, which was a small, secluded island, set aside as a residence for him and his few closest followers. On reaching it he sent most of his men home, bidding them all to come to him the next day. Only his few usual companions remained with him. He entertained the company to a hasty meal, of which he too partook; his young prisoners he placed in the care of a young Greek who had been captured not long before, so that they might have someone to talk to. He assigned them a hut not far from his own and gave instructions that care should be taken of the young man, and particularly that no one should be allowed to treat the girl with disrespect. He himself was so fatigued after his journey, so beset by pressing cares, that he had already fallen asleep.

8 Silence enveloped the marsh. It was the time of the first watch. For the girl and her companion the absence of people to interrupt them presented a good opportunity for voicing their sorrows. In my opinion, the very darkness aggravated their misery, for there was no sight or sound to distract them, and they could devote themselves solely to their grief. So the girl, with many a solitary sigh (she lay apart from the others, as had been commanded, on a pallet bed), and amid a flood of tears, cried: "Apollo, you punish us too much and too harshly for our sins! Do you think we have not already suffered punishment enough—separation from our families, capture by pirates, a thousand dangers at sea, now a second capture by bandits on land, and a future even bitterer than the past? What end will you bring to our torments? If it is an inviolate death, then my end will be sweet. But if someone is to have his way with me—as not even Theagenes has—then I shall forestall the outrage by hanging myself, preserving myself as pure as I now preserve myself, even unto death. My chastity will make me a fine shroud! Yours is the cruelest court in which I shall ever stand trial!"

Theagenes interrupted her. "Enough, my darling, my soul, Charikleia. Your lamentations may be justified, but you provoke the godhead more than you think. You should plead, not reproach; the powers above are made propitious by prayers, not by accusations."

"You are right," she said. "How are you now?"

"Better," he replied, "now the evening has come. And the treatment the young lad gave me has soothed and comforted the agony of my wounds."

"You will be more comfortable yet, come the morning," said the man who had been given the task of looking after them. "I shall bring you an herb that will heal your wounds in three days. I know; I have used it before. Ever since I was brought here as a prisoner, any of those serving this leader who have returned wounded from a skirmish have not taken many days to recover if they use this herb I mentioned. You should not be surprised if I am concerned about you, for you seem to share the same

fate as I do. I feel sympathy for you because you are Greek, and I am a Greek myself."

"A Greek! Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the strangers in joyful unison. "Truly a Greek in birth and speech! Perhaps now there will be some respite from our suffering."

"What name should we call you by?" asked Theagenes.

"Knemon," he replied.

"And where are you from?"

"Athens."

"And what is your story?"

"Stop," he said. "Why do you batter and prize open these doors, to borrow a phrase from the tragedians?[8] This is no time to introduce a new theme into your own tragedy in the form of my misfortunes. Besides, what is left of the night would not be time enough for the telling, especially as you need sleep and rest after all that you have been through."

But they pressed their request and by all means besought him to tell 9
his tale, thinking that the story of woes like their own would be a great consolation. So Knemon began.

"My father was Aristippos, an Athenian by birth, a member of the Upper Council,[9] fairly well-to-do. After the death of my mother, he was disposed to marry a second time, thinking it ill to anchor all his hopes on me, his only child. So he took to wife a woman, pretty enough, but the cause of much evil for his house. Her name was Demainete. From the moment she entered the house, she had my father in her power, obedient to her every whim. She exploited her charms to win the old man's affections and lavished attentions on him. If ever a woman knew how to drive a man mad with passion, she did, so extraordinarily well versed was she in the arts of allurement. When my father went out, she sighed, and when he came in, she ran to meet him; when he was late home, she complained and said she would have died if he had been a second later; and with every word she kissed him, and with every kiss she wept. By all this my father was ensnared: he lived for her, had eyes for her alone.

"At first she pretended to look on me as a son, though this was only another trick to win her way to Aristippos's heart. Sometimes she would come up to me and kiss me, and she was forever requesting the pleasure of my company. I did not object, for I had no inkling of the truth. I was simply surprised that she showed a mother's affection towards me. But

8. To be precise, from Euripides' *Medeia* (1317). There is a concealed anachronism here, since the novel is actually set at a date rather earlier than the lifetime of Euripides.

9. The Council of the Areiopagos, named after the Hill of Ares in Athens, where it sat. It was composed of all former holders of the office of *archon,* the highest office of state at Athens, and, until the democratic reforms of the fifth century B.C., formed a center of aristocratic and conservative influence in the Athenian state. Its prestige survived its loss of power. Aristippos is thus a man of some standing, socially and politically.

when her advances became bolder, her kisses grew warmer than they ought to have been, and the far from chaste look in her eyes aroused my suspicions, then I avoided her for the móst part, and when she came near me I kept her at arm's length. Why should I bore you with all the details of what ensued? Her repeated attempts at seduction, her repeated promises? Sometimes she would call me her child, at others her darling. She would address me as her son and heir, and then, a minute later, as her beloved. In short, she intertwined decent names with seductive ones and observed carefully which I responded to best. With the more respectable names she was masquerading as a mother, but with those unnatural endearments she revealed all too plainly that she was aflame with desire.

10 "In the end this is what happened. It was during the festival of the Great Panathenaia,[10] when the people of Athens escort a ship overland to Athene. I had just come of age,[11] and, after singing the traditional hymn to the goddess and taking part in the ritual procession, I went home still dressed in my short mantle and garlands. The moment she saw me, she was beside herself. She no longer made any attempt to disguise her passion; her desire was quite blatant. She ran to me, threw her arms around me, and cried, 'My young Hippolytos!'[12]

"You can imagine my reaction if even now I blush in the telling. That evening my father was dining out in the Council Hall and was going to be away all night, as is the way with such ceremonies and public merrymaking. She came to me in the night, seeking satisfaction for her unnatural desires. But I was not to be seduced, and rebuffed all her attentions, promises, and threats, until at last she left, with a deep sigh. She waited only for morning before she started her devilish web of intrigue against me.

"Her first step was not to leave her bed that morning. When my father came home and asked her what was wrong, she pretended to be unwell and at first would not answer his question. However, he persisted and asked her again and again what had happened until she replied: 'That paragon of piety, that son of ours, yours and mine, to whom—as the

10. The festival of the Panathenaia was celebrated every summer to mark the birthday of the goddess Athene. Every fourth year it was observed with much more pomp and ceremony: this was the Great Panathenaia. The center point of the festival was a procession to convey to the cult statue of Athene on the Akropolis a specially embroidered robe (*peplos*), which was carried through the streets of Athens hoisted on the mast of a ship with wheels.

11. Knemon was an *ephebos*. Young men were registered in the college of *epheboi* on their eighteenth birthday, at least from the fourth century B.C., although the institution was less formalized before that time. Knemon took part in the procession as a member of a formal group, wearing a sort of uniform.

12. The text is uncertain here, but the point is clear enough. Hippolytos, the son of Theseus, was the object of the desire of his stepmother, Phaidra, just as Knemon is of Demainete's. In the myth Phaidra killed herself after revealing her love to Hippolytos and being rebuffed by him; but before she died, she left a note accusing him of attempting to rape her; Theseus, ignorant of the truth, cursed his son and so caused his death. See the *Hippolytos* of Euripides.

gods are my witness—I have often shown more affection than you have, discovered somehow that I was pregnant, which I was hiding from you until I knew for certain. He waited until you were out of the house and then, when I was giving him my usual advice, urging him to behave himself and not to waste so much time drinking and whoring—these tendencies of his had not escaped me, though I said nothing to you for fear you would think I was acting like a typical stepmother—when I was saying all this to him in absolute privacy to spare his blushes, well, I cannot bring myself to repeat all the outrageous things he said about you and me, but he kicked me in the belly, which is the cause of my present condition.'

"In reply he said not a word, asked no question, gave me no opportu- 11
nity to defend myself, but without more ado, taking it for granted that one who was so well disposed to me would not have told lies about me, immediately found me somewhere about the house and, much to my surprise, set about me with his fists and then called his slaves and had me soundly whipped. I did not even have the usual consolation of knowing the reason for this flogging. When he had sated his anger, I said, 'Perhaps now, Father, if not before, I might know the reason for this beating?'

"This question only added to his exasperation. 'The hypocrite!' he exclaimed. 'He wants me to explain his depravity to him!'

"With that he turned away and hurried off to Demainete. But her spite was not yet glutted, and she set in motion a second scheme against me. This is what it was. She had a slave girl by the name of Thisbe, a not unattractive creature who could sing to the harp. She set Thisbe on to me, told her to fall in love with me—yes, to fall in love with me!—which Thisbe, of course, immediately did! And although she had often rejected my advances, she now began to lead me on in every way she could, with looks, gestures, and various other tokens. Like an idiot, I was convinced that I had suddenly become good-looking, and in the end she came to my room one night, and I let her in. She came a second and a third time, and after that she would come to me every night.

"One night, when I warned her at some length to take care not to let her mistress find out, she said; 'Knemon, I think you must be very naive. If you think that it is wrong for a bought slave like me to be caught having intercourse with you, what punishment would you say that woman deserves who claims to be of a good family, who is lawfully wedded to a husband, who knows that death is the penalty for such an offense,[13] but nevertheless takes a lover?'

13. In classical Athens a husband had the right to kill his wife's lover if he caught him in the act (as Knemon, acting for his supposedly absent father, proposes to do at 1.12). This right, however, seems not to have extended to killing the wife, nor did an adulterous wife face death if the case came to law. Many of Heliodoros's legal details in this episode are vaguely plausible inventions rather than historical facts.

" 'Stop!' I cried. 'I cannot believe what you are saying.'

" 'Nevertheless, if you wish, I shall deliver her lover to you in the act.'

" 'If only you would,' I said.

" 'Indeed I will,' she replied, 'not just for your sake, because she has treated you so outrageously, but equally for my own: every day I suffer to the limits of endurance because of an unfounded jealousy she nurses against me. Be sure not to let me down.'

12 "I promised that I would not, and for that night she left me. But two nights later she roused me from my sleep, whispering that the lover was in the house; my father, she said, had gone off to the country on unexpected business, and the lover—such was the arrangement he had with Demainete—had not long since stolen his way in. She told me I must steel myself for vengeance and burst in, blade in hand, so that the villain should not get away. I did as she said, and armed with a dagger I made my way to the bedroom, Thisbe leading the way and lighting the lamps as we went. When we reached the room, there was lamplight glimmering from inside. The doors were closed, but in my anger I burst them open and sprang into the room, shouting, 'Where is the scoundrel, this fine lover of that paragon of chastity?'

"And with these words I stepped forward to dispatch the pair of them. But—heaven have mercy!—it was my father who slid from the bed and fell at my feet, pleading: 'My child, stay your hand a while! Have pity on your father! Have mercy on the grey head that raised you! I have done you wrong, but I do not deserve to die. Do not lose control of your temper and stain your hands with your father's blood.'

"To these pitiful pleas he added others of the same kind. I stood there, thunderstruck in incoherent horror. I looked for Thisbe, but somehow she had slipped away. I stared at the bed and gazed round the room, lost for words, incapable of action. The blade dropped from my hand, and Demainete darted forward and grabbed it. Now that my father was safe, he seized hold of me and ordered me to be thrown into chains. Demainete fueled the flames of his anger, shouting: 'Is not this what I warned you of? I told you to beware of the boy. I said he would attack you if he had the chance. I saw the look in his eye, and I knew what he was thinking.'

" 'Yes,' he replied, 'you did warn me, but I did not believe you.'

"And for that night he had me locked up, and although I tried to ex-
13 plain to him how things really were, he refused to hear a single word. As soon as it was light, he took me, still in my chains, before the popular assembly. His head begrimed with dirt,[14] he began to speak.

14. To arouse the pity of the jurymen.

" 'It was with higher hopes than this, men of Athens, that I reared this boy. From the hour of his birth I expected him to be a support in my old age; I gave him the upbringing that befits a free man; I gave him an excellent education; I had him enrolled in my phratry and my clan;[15] I entered his name in the register of ephebes; I proclaimed him a fellow citizen of yours according to the laws; I anchored the whole of my life on him. But he shows no gratitude for all I have done for him. He began by insulting me and assaulting my lawful wife here, and ended up by drawing his sword on me in the night. He was prevented from becoming a father-killer only by Chance, which made him drop his weapon in sudden panic. So I have come to seek your protection, and I now denounce him before you. The laws allow me to put him to death myself, but I do not choose to do so. Rather I leave everything in your hands, preferring to see justice done in my son's case by due process of law rather than by summary execution.'

"As he spoke, he wept. Demainete began to sob loudly too, making a great but insincere show of sympathy for me, calling me an unfortunate boy who was going to die deservedly but before his time, who had been turned against his parents by malevolent powers. She was not lamenting so much as using her lamentations to testify against me and confirming the truth of the accusation with her tears.

"When I asked leave to speak, the secretary stepped forward and asked me one simple question: Had I drawn a sword on my father?

" 'I did,' I replied, 'but let me explain.'

"There was a general outcry, and they decided that I did not even have the right to speak in my own defense. Some held that I should be stoned to death, others that I should be handed over to the public executioner and cast into the Pit.[16] Throughout this uproar, and all the time they were engaged in casting their votes about my punishment, I kept shouting: 'Stepmother! I am being done to death by my stepmother! My stepmother is destroying me without a trial!'

"Many of them took note of my words and began to suspect the truth. But even then I was not given a hearing, for the assembly was by now in such a furor that nothing could be done to stop it.

"When the votes were counted, those in favor of the death penalty 14
numbered about seventeen hundred, some of whom advocated stoning,

15. The phratry (*phratria,* "brotherhood") was a broad kinship group; membership of a phratry was the essential qualification for Athenian citizenship, at least until the reforms of Kleisthenes in 508–507 B.C. The clan (*genos*) was a group of men claiming descent from a common ancestor; it was a narrower grouping than the phratry and had definite aristocratic connotations.

16. The *barathron,* a gully to the west of the Akropolis where people condemned for crimes against the state were hurled to their death. Stoning was never an official method of execution at Athens.

others hurling me into the Pit; those against were around a thousand, who, swayed by their suspicion of a stepmother, condemned me to perpetual exile. Even so, it was their judgment that carried the day, for although they numbered less than the total opposition, the opposition was divided as to the proper penalty, and so the thousand were the largest single group. Thus I was banished from my family home and the land of my birth; but that she-devil Demainete did not escape the punishment that was her due. How this came about I shall tell you another time, but now you must sleep. We are far into the night, and you badly need rest."

"But it will only add to our misery," said Theagenes, "if the wicked Demainete is left unpunished in your story."

"Very well then," replied Knemon. "If that is what you wish, I shall tell you."

"After the trial I did not tarry but went straight down to the Peiraeus. There I found a ship on the point of setting sail and made the crossing to Aigina, where I knew my mother had relations. After landing I found the people I was looking for, and to begin with the time passed quite pleasantly.

"About three weeks later, in the course of my customary stroll, I went down to the harbor. A cutter was just coming into port, and I lingered a while, curious to see where she was from and who her passengers were. Even before the gangplank was properly fixed, a man leapt ashore, ran up to me, and threw his arms around me. It was Charias, a contemporary of mine.

" 'I have good news for you, Knemon,' he said. 'Justice is done. Your foe has paid the price. Demainete is dead!'

" 'Greetings, Charias,' I said, 'but why do you hurry past this piece of good news as if the tale you had to tell were something appalling? Tell me just how she died, for I am very much afraid that she may have died some run-of-the-mill death and so escaped the end she deserved.'

" 'Justice,' replied Charias, 'has not altogether departed from this world as Hesiod says.[17] Small transgressions she may sometimes overlook, delaying her reprisals long, but on the truly wicked her eye falls keen. So she pursued the sin of Demainete. I knew everything that was done or said, for, as you know, I am intimate with Thisbe, and she told me all. After the sentence of exile was imposed on you, little though you deserved it, your poor father began to regret what he had done. He removed himself to some remote place in the country, and there he lived, devouring his heart, to use Homer's phrase.[18] As for Demainete, the Fu-

17. Charias seems to have in mind a passage of Aratos's *Phainomena* (96–136). The lines of Hesiod usually cited here (*Works and Days* 197ff.) concern not Justice (Dike) but Shame (Aidos) and Divine Retribution (Nemesis).

18. *Iliad* 6.202.

ries were on her trail at once. She loved you even more madly now you were gone; her tears of sorrow never ceased: they were for you, she said, but really they were for herself. "Knemon," she cried night and day, calling you her darling little boy, her very soul. Her lady friends who came to visit her were astonished and impressed that a stepmother showed a mother's feelings, and tried to comfort her and raise her spirits. But she said that the pain was beyond comforting and that no one else could know what barbs had pierced her heart.

" 'Whenever she was alone, she would complain at length that Thisbe 15
had not served her as a servant ought. "She is interested only in doing harm," she would say. "She did nothing to help me in my love, but when it came to robbing me of my darling, it was no sooner said than done; she did not even give me a chance to change my mind!"

"It was quite clear that she meant Thisbe no good, and when Thisbe realized that she was nursing such a burden of resentment and was so racked with the pain of her grief that she might strike at any moment, particularly as her fury and desire had undermined her reason, she decided to forestall her mistress: she would strike the first blow and thus secure her own safety. So she went to Demainete and said: "What is the meaning of all this, mistress? Why blame your poor servant for something she did not do? Your wish has always been my command; this business is no exception. If all has not gone as you wished, then you must put it down to Chance. I am ready and able to devise you a way out of your predicament. You only have to say the word."

" '"My dear girl," replied Demainete, "what way out can there be when the one man who could provide it is out of reach? It is the unexpected clemency of the court that has done for me. If he had been stoned or put to death, then at any rate the pain in my heart would have died with him. For once something is beyond hope, it is erased from the soul, and when there is no longer any prospect of achieving its desires, then the grieving heart may cease to suffer. But, as it is, I fancy I see him; I delude myself that I can hear his voice; I blush to hear him rebuke my wicked scheme. I dream that one day I shall find him come to me by stealth and take my pleasure of him, or that I shall go to him, wherever in the world he may be. These thoughts fan the flames of desire and drive me mad with longing. Oh, gods! I deserve my torment! Why did I not use gentle persuasion instead of underhand schemes against him? Why did I not cast myself on his mercy instead of hounding him? He repelled my first advances—but so he ought: he was shrinking not merely from adultery but from adultery with his own father's wife. But perhaps in time he might have been induced to soften; perhaps gentle handling might have brought him round. Instead, I behaved like a savage beast, more like a tyrant than a lover. I took offense because he would not do

exactly as I said but thought nothing of Demainete, though his charms far surpass hers. But, sweet Thisbe, what is this way out you mentioned?"

" ' "An easy one, mistress," she replied. "For all most people know, Knemon has left the city and gone abroad in accordance with the verdict of the court; but I have been busy on your behalf, and I have discovered that he is in hiding somewhere near the city. I am sure you have heard of Arsinoe the flute girl. She was Knemon's mistress. After his fall from fortune she took him in and promised to go away with him. She is keeping him in her house until she is ready to leave."

" ' "What a lucky woman Arsinoe is," exclaimed Demainete. "She was already Knemon's lover, and now she is off to foreign parts with him. But what might all this have to do with me?"

" ' "A great deal, mistress," answered Thisbe. "I shall pretend to be in love with Knemon and ask Arsinoe, who is an old professional acquaintance of mine, to let me go to him in the night in her place. If she agrees, then you must play the part of Arsinoe and take her place in his bed. I shall make sure that he has had a drink or two before he goes to bed. If you get what you want, it is more than likely that your passion will abate; for most women one consummation is enough to dowse the fires of their desire; performance of the act slakes lust. If (which heaven forfend) your desires persist, we must think again: if at first you don't succeed, try, try again, as they say.[19] For the moment, though, let us attend to the matter in hand."

16 " 'Demainete thought this a good plan and begged her to put the scheme into effect with all speed. Thisbe asked her mistress to allow her one day to bring the plan to completion. Then she went to Arsinoe and said, "You know Teledemos?" Arsinoe said she did, and Thisbe went on. "Let us have a room for the day. I promised that I would sleep with him. He will come first, and I shall join him when I have put my mistress to bed."

" 'Then she hurried to Aristippos in the country and said: "I have come to make a confession, sir. Do to me what you will. It is partly my fault that you have lost your son. I did not mean it to happen, but nevertheless I am partly to blame. You see, I discovered that my mistress's conduct was not all it should be, that she was dishonoring your bed. I was both afraid for my own sake that it would be bad for me if this state of affairs was brought to light by someone else, and distressed for yours if this treatment was all the thanks you got for the love you showed your wife; but, being unable to summon the courage to tell you face to face, I

19. Literally "there will be a second setting sail," a proverb used most notably by Plato (*Phaidon* 99C) and explained by a late commentator as referring to those who take to their oars when they find the wind fails.

went to the young master, in the night for secrecy's sake, and revealed all to him, saying that there was a lover sleeping with the mistress. As you know, he had an old score to settle with her and, thinking that I meant that the lover was in the house at that very moment, he was seized with a fit of uncontrollable anger. He seized his dagger and, ignoring all my attempts to restrain him, all my protestations that nothing of that kind was going on at that moment, or else suspecting that I had had second thoughts, he rushed to her bedroom in a fury. You know what happened next. Now, if you care to take it, you have an opportunity to show your son, even though he is in exile at present, that you regret what has happened, and at the same time to take vengeance on the woman who has done you both wrong. This very day I shall show you Demainete in bed with her lover in a house—not even her own house, mark you!—outside the town."

" ' "If you show me this as you promise," replied Aristippos, "you will be rewarded with your freedom. Perhaps vengeance on a hated foe would breathe new life into me. For a long time now I have nursed smoldering suspicions, but I have taken no action for lack of proof. What do I have to do?"

" ' " 'You know the garden where the Monument of the Epicureans[20] is?" she said. "Go there this evening and wait for me."

" 'With these words she hurried off the Demainete and said: "Make 17
yourself attractive. You must look your prettiest when you get there. I have made all the preparations, just as I said I would."

" 'Demainete embraced her and did as she said. Evening was already closing in; Thisbe took her by the hand and led her away to keep her assignation. When they were still a little way distant, she told her mistress to wait a moment and went on ahead by herself to ask Arsinoe to take herself off to another room and not interrupt her: the boy, she said, was shy, having only recently begun his initiation into the mysteries of Aphrodite. Arsinoe did as she was asked, and Thisbe returned to collect Demainete, took her into the house, and laid her down on the bed, removing the lamp to avoid, she said, Demainete being recognized by you—though of course you were in Aigina all the time.

" 'After making her promise to consummate her desire without uttering a sound, she said: "I am going to fetch the young man; I shall bring him to you. He is drinking in a neighbor's house not far from here."

" 'She slipped out and found Aristippos in the appointed place. In response to her urgent exhortations to catch the lover in the act and arrest

20. There is a serious anachronism here. Epikouros the philosopher died in 270 B.C., much later than the dramatic date of the plot. This garden was the headquarters of his school of philosophy; here it is sited, authentically, outside the walls of Athens on the road to the Akademia.

him, he went with her and burst suddenly into the room. Finding the bed with some difficulty in the dim moonlight, he cried, "You are caught, damn you!"

" 'The very instant that he uttered these words, Thisbe slammed the doors as loudly as she could and exclaimed: "Calamity! Her lover has got away! Be careful not to lose them both, master."

" ' "Don't worry," he replied. "I have the godforsaken woman. She was the one I really wanted." And seizing Demainete, he led her off towards the city.

" 'Demainete, of course, saw her predicament in a flash: her hopes had come to nothing, her reputation was lost forever, the law would take its course, and punishment awaited her. Smarting at the way she had been trapped, furious at the way she had been tricked, when she reached the Pit in the Akademia (you must know the place; it is where the polemarchs perform the traditional sacrifices to the Heroes),[21] she suddenly wrenched her hands free of the old man and hurled herself in, head first. Thus she died, a fitting death for one so evil. Aristippos said only, "You have given me satisfaction, even before the laws took their course."

" 'The next day he apprised the people of all that had taken place, and, securing a pardon only with some difficulty, he set about canvassing his friends and acquaintances in the hope of obtaining your recall. Whether or not he succeeded I cannot tell you, for before a decision was reached I set sail for Aigina, as you see, on private business. Nevertheless you can expect the people to agree to your recall and your father to come to fetch you. That was what he declared he would do.'

18 "That was the news that Charias brought me. What happened next, how I came here, what adventures I have had is a long story, and there is not time enough to tell it."

And he wept. The strangers wept too, ostensibly at his story but in fact in remembrance of their own. They would not have ceased from sorrowing, had not sleep, drawn by the pleasure they took in weeping, come fluttering down to staunch their tears.

So they slept, but Thyamis (this was the name of the robber chieftain), after sleeping soundly most of the night, had been disturbed by certain fleeting visions that appeared to him in his dreams and startled him from his slumbers. Unable to divine their meaning, he lay awake, wrapped in thought. It was about the time that cocks crow, possibly (so the theory runs) because their instinctive perception of the sun's course

21. The *polemarchos* (literally "war commander") was the third in rank of the nine annually appointed *archontes,* or magistrates. By the classical period the office no longer entailed military command, its functions being mainly ritual. The pseudo-Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* (58) tells us that one of the duties of the polemarch was to make offerings to the tyrannicides Harmodios and Aristogeiton, who were regarded as heroes; Pausanias (1.29.15) adds the information that they were buried in the Akademia.

around the earth moves them to salute the god, or else because a combination of warmth and urgent desire to stir and feed causes them to issue their distinctive summons to the men who share their lives, and rouse them to work. The dream that visited him was god-sent; this is what it was. He was in Memphis, his hometown, and found himself at the temple of Isis, which he dreamt was all ablaze with torchlight; the altars and sacred hearths were drenched with the blood of all kinds of animals; the gates and colonnades were teeming with people, who filled the whole place with a confused babble of chatter. When he went inside the shrine itself, he dreamt the goddess came to him, gave Charikleia into his hands, and said, "Thyamis, this maiden I deliver to you; you shall have her and not have her; you shall do wrong and slay her, but she shall not be slain."

This dream caused him great perplexity, and he turned the vision over and over in his mind, wondering what it could mean. Eventually, in desperation he forced the interpretation to conform with his own desires. The words "you shall have her and not have her" he took to mean as a wife and no longer a virgin; "you shall slay her" he guessed was a reference to the wounds of defloration, from which Charikleia would not die.

That was how he interpreted the dream, for that was how his desires 19
expounded it to him. At dawn he summoned his lieutenants, and, dignifying their plunder with the title of spoils of war, he ordered it to be laid out where all could see. He also sent for Knemon, telling him to bring his charges as well.

"What fate awaits us?" they cried on their way to the meeting, and pleaded with Knemon to do what he could to help them. He pledged his aid and urged them not to despair; the robber captain, he assured them, was not a complete savage but had a gentle side to his nature; he came from a distinguished family and had taken up his present way of life only out of necessity. By this time they had reached the meeting place, and the rest of the company had assembled. Thyamis took his seat on a mound and declared the island to be a parliament. Instructing Knemon to interpret to the prisoners what he was about to say—for Knemon could by now understand Egyptian, whereas Thyamis was not fluent in Greek—he began his speech.

"Comrades, you know how I have always felt towards you. As you know, I was born the son of the high priest at Memphis, but I did not succeed to the priesthood after my father's disappearance, since my younger brother illegally usurped the office.[22] I took refuge with you in the hope of gaining revenge and regaining my position. You chose me to

22. By the classical period, Egyptian priesthoods had become almost family possessions, passing as a rule to the eldest son on the decease of the father; compare Herodotos 2.37.

be your leader, and to this day I have made a practice of not giving myself a larger share than the rest of you. If it has been a case of sharing money, then I have been content with an equal portion, and if it has been a matter of selling prisoners, I have contributed the proceeds to the common fund in the belief that a leader as good as I hope I am should undertake the largest share of the work but receive only an equal share of the profits. As for prisoners, I have enrolled into our number those men whose physical strength was likely to be of use to us, and sold the weaker ones; I have never misused a woman, but I have set free the wellborn, either for ransom or from simple pity at their misfortune, while those of humble extraction, for whom slavery was a normal way of life rather than a condition imposed on them by their capture, I have distributed among you all as servants.

"But in the present case I am asking you for one item of our spoils: this foreign girl. I could present her to myself, but I think it better to take her with the consent of you all; it would be silly to take the prisoner by force and thus stand revealed as acting against the will of my friends. Furthermore, I am not asking you this as a free favor: I shall repay you by taking no share in the rest of the booty. As the priestly caste despises common sex, it is not for bodily pleasure that I have decided she should be mine, but for the continuation of my line.

20 "Let me explain my reasons to you. In the first place she seems to me wellborn. This I surmise from the treasure that was found with her, and the fact that rather than submitting to her present misfortunes she has retained a pride befitting her original station. Next, I estimate that her soul is good and chaste: since in beauty she excels all women but by the modesty of her expression she compels respect from those that look upon her, is it not inevitable that she should inspire the best opinion about herself? That is only right. But, most important, she seems to me to be the priestess of some god. Even in dire adversity she thinks it altogether
21 wrong to remove her sacred crown and robe. I put it to you, my friends: what better match could there be than one between high priest and consecrated priestess?"

They all cheered and gave their blessing to the marriage.

"Thank you," he continued, "but we must also ask the young lady what her feelings are in this matter. If this were simply a case of exercising authority, my will would be quite sufficient: for those with power to compel, polite inquiry is superfluous. But in the case of marriage the consent of both parties is needed."

Turning to the girl, he asked, "What are your feelings, my dear, about becoming my wife?" At the same time he asked her to explain who they were and whence they came.

For a while she stood with her eyes fixed on the ground, repeatedly shaking her head, apparently gathering her thoughts to say something.

Eventually she looked Thyamis full in the face. Her beauty dazzled him even more now, for her reflections had brought a special blush to her cheeks, and there was fire in her eyes. With Knemon interpreting, she said: "It would have been more fitting for my brother Theagenes here to speak, for I think that silence becomes a woman,[23] and it is for a man to respond among men. But since you have included me in the discussion, 22
and give the first evidence of your kindness in trying to obtain your rights by persuasion rather than force, and particularly since the matter in hand bears entirely on me, I feel compelled to pass beyond the bounds of my normal maidenly conduct and reply to my master's question, even though it concerns marriage and was put before such a crowd of men.

"Our story is this: by race we are Ionians; we belong to the nobility of Ephesos. Our parents are both still alive, and as tradition calls upon such people to undertake divine service, I became priestess of Artemis, and my brother here priest of Apollo.[24] The office is held for a year, and as our tenure was drawing to an end, we were taking a sacred embassy to Delos,[25] where we were to organize musical and athletic competitions and lay down our office as dictated by ancestral custom. So a boat was loaded with enough gold, silver, vestments, and so forth for the games and public entertainment, and we put to sea. Our parents are well on in years and stayed at home from fear of the sea voyage, but many of our fellow citizens came with us, some on board the same vessel, others in their own craft.

"Our voyage was almost done, when the ship was caught by a sudden swell, a lashing gale, a welter of storm winds and tempests howling over the sea that blew it off course. In the face of such overwhelming adversity, there was nothing the helmsman could do but abandon the rudder to the storm and let fortune steer the ship. For seven days and seven nights we ran before the gale, until eventually we ran ashore on the beach where you found us. You saw the slaughter there; during the feast which we held to celebrate our deliverance, the sailors set on us, planning to kill us for our money. In the end we won the upper hand, but only after a bitter struggle that cost the lives of all our own people as well as the aggressors as each side slew and was slain.[26] From all that number we were the sole, pitiful survivors: I wish it were not so! Among so many ills our one piece of good fortune is that some god has put us into your hands. Fear for our lives has changed to thoughts about marriage, which I have not the least intention of refusing. For a woman cap-

23. Virtually a proverb, certainly a commonplace in tragedy, e.g., Sophokles *Aias* 293.

24. Ephesos was famous for its temple of Artemis (Diana of the Ephesians). Apollo and Artemis were twins, which accounts for the paired priesthoods.

25. A small island in the Cyclades, famous as the birthplace of Apollo and Artemis and sacred to Apollo, in whose honor an annual festival of song, dance, and athletic contests was held there.

26. A tag lifted from the *Iliad* (4.451, 8.65).

tured in war to be thought worthy of her master's bed is already the pinnacle of good fortune, and for one who is herself dedicated to the gods to become the wife of the son of a high priest—who, god willing, will soon be a high priest himself—this certainly seems to bear the mark of heaven's care.

"Just one grace I beg you, Thyamis. First allow me to go to a town or some other place where there is an altar or shrine to Apollo, and there lay aside my priesthood and its insignia. It would be better to go to Memphis when you resume your rightful place as high priest, for then the marriage would be celebrated with better cheer, linked with victory, and consummated in success. But I leave it to you to decide whether it should be sooner. Only let me perform our traditional rite first. I know you will agree, for, as you say, you have been destined for divine service since childhood and attach great importance to religious observance."

23 As she finished speaking, she started weeping. The whole assembly pronounced their blessing on her request and urged Thyamis to do as she asked, shouting that they had no objection. Thyamis pronounced his blessing too, though his feelings were mixed. So aflame was he with desire for Charikleia that even one hour's postponement seemed an eternity of waiting, but her words worked a siren spell on him and compelled his assent. And besides, he thought back to his dream and felt sure that the marriage was destined to take place at Memphis. He dismissed the assembly after distributing the plunder, himself receiving many of the choicest items, which his men were pleased to grant him.

24 He told them to be ready to march on Memphis in ten days' time. To the Greeks he allocated the same cabin as before, and again, by his command, Knemon shared it with them, but henceforward he was appointed not their warder but their companion. Thyamis saw to it that they passed their days in conditions of rather greater comfort than hitherto, and even invited Theagenes to share his table occasionally, out of respect for his sister. As for Charikleia herself, however, he decided to avoid seeing her as far as possible, for fear that the sight of her might fuel the craving flame that burned within him and make him break the resolutions he had made, the promises he had given. For these reasons Thyamis shunned the sight of his bride, for he thought that he could not look upon her without yielding to temptation.

The bandits dispersed to their quarters in various parts of the lake, and as soon as they were gone, Knemon ventured out a short distance from the lake in search of the herb that he had promised to Theagenes the previous day.

25 Meanwhile, Theagenes took advantage of his absence to break into tears and loud sobbing. Not a word did he speak to Charikleia, but over and again he called on the gods to be his witness; and when she asked

him whether these tears were caused by the same woes that had caused them both so many tears before, or whether some unfamiliar affliction had befallen him, he answered, "What affliction could be less familiar, more unrighteous than oaths and vows transgressed, than Charikleia putting me out of her thoughts and assenting to marriage with another?"

"Do not say such things," the girl said. "Do not doubt me: that would be harder to bear than any misfortune. When experience has given you such ample proof of my love in the past, do not become suspicious now because of a few expedient words uttered in need. Otherwise it will be just the opposite of what you say: the change in you will seem far greater than any change you will find in me. I admit that we are in a sorry plight, but no peril could ever be so dire as to induce me to compromise my virtue. Only once to my knowledge have I been less than virtuous—in my original passion for you. But even that was honorable, for from the start I gave myself to you not like a woman yielding to her lover, but like a wife pledging herself to her husband. To this day I have kept myself unstained by carnal contact, even with you. Many times have I repelled your advances, looking to the day when the union we pledged at the outset—a vow that has bound us through all adversity—will be legally solemnized. It would be quite absurd if you really thought that I preferred a savage to a Greek, a robber to my beloved."

"Then what was the meaning of that fine speech of yours?" said Theagenes. "Making out that I am your brother was an exceedingly clever ruse: it prevents Thyamis becoming jealous of us and allows us to keep each other's company without fear. And I realized that the story about Ionia and losing our way to Delos was a way of concealing the truth, intended to make those who heard it lose their way indeed! But 26
why you should so readily agree to marry him, accept his proposal so unambiguously, and even fix the date, that surpassed both my power and my desire to comprehend. I prayed for the earth to open and swallow me up rather than have all my hopes, all the ordeals I have faced for your sake, end like this!"

Charikleia threw her arms around Theagenes, smothered him with kisses, showered him with tears. "It gives me great joy," she said, "to hear you voice such fears about me, for they prove that your love for me has not been diminished by all our misfortunes. But let me tell you, Theagenes, that we should not be talking together like this now if I had not made the promises I did; for, as you know, immovable resistance only aggravates the force of irresistible passion, whereas a meek answer and swift submission can curb the first eruption of desire and soothe away the pangs of lust with the sweet taste of a promise given. Lovers of a coarser grain, it seems to me, consider a declaration of intent as the first act of love: a promise makes them think they own you, and thenceforth,

secure in the haven of their hopes, they act with much more composure. It was with this end in mind that I went through the motions of engaging myself to him. Now our future is in the hands of the gods and the power that from the beginning has been allocated the responsibility of overseeing our love.[27] A day or two can often do much to deliver us from peril, and chance can bring to pass what all the plans of men have failed to achieve. So in this affair my intention was to fend off the certain dangers of the present with the uncertainties of the future. My deception is our protection, my love, and we must maintain it and say nothing, not just to the others but to Knemon too. I know he has been kind to us, I know he is a Greek, but he is a captive and will try to ingratiate himself with his master, if so he may. We have neither a long friendship nor a close connection to give us a firm guarantee of his reliability, so even if his suspicions lead him to light upon the truth about us, our first reaction must be to deny it. Sometimes even a lie can be good, if it helps those who speak it without harming those to whom it is spoken."

27 Charikleia was still propounding these suggestions and others similarly intended to win them the advantage, when Knemon ran through the door in breathless haste, his alarm and consternation evident on his face. "I have brought you the herb, Theagenes," he said. "Lay it on your wounds and heal them. Now we must gird ourselves for more wounds and another crop of killings.

"There is no time to explain now," he went on, when Theagenes appealed to him to say more clearly what he meant. "Events might overtake my words. Hurry now, come with me—Charikleia too!"

And seizing them both by the arm, he took them to Thyamis, whom he found polishing a helmet and sharpening a lance.[28] "You have chosen the right time to be busy with your weapons," he cried. "Put on your own gear and tell the others to do the same. The biggest enemy force I have ever seen is upon us. I saw their heads coming over the ridge not far from here—that's how close they are!—and I have run all the way here at top speed to warn you of the attack, and on my way across the lake I told as many as I could to prepare for action."

28 Thyamis sprang to his feet. "Where is Charikleia?" he demanded, apparently more concerned for her safety than for his own. Knemon pointed to where she stood, not far away, modestly inconspicuous in the doorway.

27. Here, as often elsewhere in the novel, we have the notion of a personal spirit (*daimon*), more often than not malevolent, which has had an individual allocated to it as its portion.

28. This seems to be modeled on a scene in the *Iliad* (6.321ff.), where Hektor, who has left the battlefield to fetch his brother Paris, discovers him preparing his weapons in his bedroom and then encourages him to come out and fight.

"Take her to the cave," whispered Thyamis so that only Knemon could hear, "where we hoard our treasure away for safekeeping. Put her in, my friend, close the entrance with the stone in the normal way, and then come back to me as soon as you can. The fighting will be my concern.[29]

He ordered his henchman to bring a sacrificial animal so that they could make an offering to their native gods before entering battle. Knemon set off on his appointed errand, and though Charikleia cried loud and long and kept turning back towards Theagenes, he brought her to the cave and shut her in. This cave was no work of nature like the many caverns that form spontaneously above and below ground: it was created by brigand handiwork in mimicry of nature, a warren dug by Egyptian hands for the safekeeping of plunder. It was fashioned some- 29
what as follows: it was entered through a narrow, lightless opening concealed beneath the doorway of a secret chamber in such a way that the stone threshold acted as a second door, giving access to the underground passage when need arose; this stone dropped effortlessly into place and could be opened just as easily. Beyond the opening was a maze of irregularly winding tunnels. The shafts and passages leading to the heart of the cave in some places ran separately, with cunning twists and turns; at others they met and crisscrossed like roots, until in the nethermost depths they merged and opened into a broad gallery lit by a feeble shaft of light from a fissure near the lake's edge. It was down here that Knemon brought Charikleia, using his knowledge of the path to guide her steps to the innermost recesses of the case, where, after doing what he could to lift her spirits and giving her his word that he would return that evening with Theagenes—whom he would not allow to come to close quarters with the enemy but would keep clear of the fray—he left her. Not a sound passed Charikleia's lips; this new misfortune was like a deathblow to her, separation from Theagenes tantamount to the loss of her own life. Leaving her numbed and silent, Knemon climbed out of the cave, and as he replaced the threshold stone, he shed a tear in sorrow for himself at the necessity that contrained him, and for her at the fate that afflicted her; he had virtually entombed her alive and consigned Charikleia, mankind's brightest jewel, to darkest night.

He ran back to Thyamis, whom he found spoiling for the fight; he and Theagenes were both fitted out in fine array, and Thyamis was haranguing those of his men who had already assembled, rousing them to even greater fury. He was standing in their midst, saying: "Comrades, I am not sure that there is any need of long speeches to put heart into you. War is a way of life to you, and you do not need me to refresh your

29. This is a near quotation of Hektor's words to his wife at *Iliad* 6.492.

memories of it. Besides, the suddenness of our enemies' attack precludes a long-winded speech; those whose enemies are already taking action must act equally swiftly to defend themselves: to fail to do so is to be culpably dilatory. We all know that it is not wives and children that are at issue, although for many these are by themselves incentive enough to fight—to us these things are of little importance, and we shall be able to replace them whenever victory is ours.[30] No, it is our very lives that are at stake; no brigand war has ever ended in a formal truce or been concluded by a treaty of peace—victory means life, and defeat inevitable death. With these thoughts to give edge to our strength and spirit, let us join battle with our bitterest enemies!"

30 His speech concluded, he looked round for his henchman and called him by name several times, "Thermouthis!" But Thermouthis was nowhere to be seen. With a torrent of menaces, Thyamis hurried to his dinghy as fast as he could run. Fighting had already broken out, and, even at a distance, one could see those who lived by the inlets along the lake's edge falling into enemy hands. As the lake dwellers fell fighting or took to their heels, the attackers set fire to their boats and cabins, the flames from which carried in the wind the short distance to the marsh, where they hungrily devoured the reeds that grew there in such abundance. Words cannot describe the blinding sheet of flame that assailed the eyes, the deafening noise that assaulted the ears. War in all its forms was loudly raging: the inhabitants of the lake put up a stout and spirited resistance, but their opponents had the immense advantages of strength of numbers and suddenness of attack; some they slew on land; others they sent to the bottom of the lake with their very boats and homes. From this scene a welter of noise rose skywards, the sounds of battle on land mingling with those of fighting on the water, the cries of killing with the cries of dying,[31] the groans of men staining the lake scarlet with their blood with the screams of men trapped by fire and water.

The sight and sound of all this reminded Thyamis of the dream in which he had seen Isis and her whole temple full of torches and sacrifices: this, he thought, was nothing other than the scene that now confronted him. Now he interpreted his dream quite differently from before: he would "have and not have" Charikleia because war robbed him of her; he would "slay but not wound" her by the sword, and not in the act of love. He cursed the goddess again and again for her deceit. Unable to bear the thought of Charikleia becoming the property of another man, he told his men to wait for a moment, explaining that they must hold their ground and carry on the battle by lying low around the islet and mount-

30. Reading *ὁσάκις* for the manuscripts' *ὅσα καί*.
31. Taken from the *Iliad* (4.451, 8.65).

ing surprise attacks from the cover of the surrounding swamps—though even with these tactics they would be lucky to hold out against the enemy's superior numbers. Then, on the pretext that he was going to find Thermouthis and make an offering to the gods of the hearth, he forbade any to follow him and made his way back to the chamber in a state of frenzy.

Once embarked on a course of action, the heart of a savage brooks no turning back. And when a barbarian loses all hope of his own preservation, he will usually kill everything he loves before he dies,[32] either in the deluded belief that he will be reunited with it beyond the grave or else to save it from the shameless clutches of his enemies. So it was that Thyamis did not spare a thought for any of the dangers that beset him, even though the enemy were all around him like a circle of nets, but, crazed with love and jealousy and anger, he went to the cave as fast as he could run and jumped down into it, shouting long and loud in the Egyptian tongue. Just by the entrance he came upon a woman who spoke to him in Greek. Guided to her by her voice, he seized her head in his left hand and drove his sword through her breast, close to the bosom. With a 31
last, piteous cry, the poor creature fell dead.

Thyamis scrambled out of the cave, and after replacing the threshold stone and sprinkling a little earth over it, he wept as he said, "This is my bridal gift to you."

On his return to the boats he found the others planning to make a run for it, for now the enemy was close enough to be clearly visible. Thermouthis had returned and was in the act of dispatching the sacrificial animal. Thyamis heaped abuse on him: he had already sacrificed the most beautiful of victims, he said. Then he clambered into his rowboat with Thermouthis and his oarsman. Being made in one piece, rather crudely hollowed out from a single, thick log, these lake boats are unable to carry more than three people. Theagenes followed in another boat with Knemon, as did the rest in their various craft.

When they were a little distance from the island, which they had not so much rowed away from as rowed round, they stilled their oars and drew their boats up in line to receive the enemy's attack full on. This was close enough for most of them; even the splashing of the oars was more than they could endure; at the very first sight of the enemy they all turned tail, some of them not brave enough even to withstand the martial din of war. Theagenes and Knemon backed off too, though their withdrawal was not entirely due to fear. Only Thyamis, who was per-

32. Shakespeare alludes to this passage in *Twelfth Night* 5.1.121ff.:

Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,
Like to the Egyptian thief at point of death,
Kill what I love?

haps too proud to run away, or even possibly unable to bear the thought of life without Charikleia, hurled himself into the midst of the foe.

32 They were just on the point of coming to grips when someone shouted: "That is him, that is Thyamis! Take care, everyone!" And with that they formed their boats into a circle around him. Thyamis tried to fend them off and inflicted a number of casualties, some of them fatal, with his spear. This was a quite incredible scene: not a single sword was raised against Thyamis, not a single arrow shot at him; the efforts of each and every one were directed at taking him alive. He held out for some time, until, faced with a concerted attack, he lost his spear and also his henchman, who had given him stout support but after sustaining an apparently fatal wound had given way to despair and flung himself overboard into the lake; being an experienced swimmer, he had swum underwater until he was out of range and then, with no little difficulty, had succeeded in getting away to the marsh. It did not occur to anyone to pursue him, for by this time they had taken Thyamis, the capture of which individual they considered a full-scale triumph. Although they had lost so many of their friends, they felt more joy in forming a respectful escort for the man who had slain them and yet lived than pity at the death of their comrades. So much more precious, evidently, do brigands consider money than life itself: friendship and kinship are defined solely in terms of financial gain. This was certainly the case here.

33 They were in fact from the same band of brigands who had fled from Thyamis and his men by the Heracleotic mouth of the Nile. Angered at being robbed of other people's property and resenting the loss of the plunder as much as if it actually belonged to them, they had mustered their comrades who had been left at home and called upon the aid of the surrounding villages, offering a fair and equal division of the spoils they expected to take. Thus they were the leaders of the assault, but their reason for taking Thyamis alive was this. He had a younger brother, Petosiris, at Memphis, who had treacherously and in defiance of ancestral usage usurped the office of high priest from Thyamis. Petosiris's inquiries had revealed to him that his elder brother was the leader of a band of outlaws, and he was afraid that Thyamis might one day seize an opportunity to take action against him; besides, he could see that he was generally suspected of having murdered the missing Thyamis. And so he had sent word round the bandit villages, offering cattle and large sums of money as a reward for anyone who brought his brother to him alive. This was what motivated the robbers, who, even in the heat of battle, were not oblivious to financial gain. So when Thyamis was recognized, they took him alive, though it cost many lives to do so.

Detailing half their number to guard him, they escorted him to dry land cursing their apparent mercy and crying that he preferred death to

these detestable shackles. The rest made their way to the island, expecting to find there the treasure and spoils they had come to collect. But though they scoured the place and left not an inch unsearched, they found nothing of what they had been hoping for, apart from a few small items that had been left lying around and not secreted in the underground cave. By this time evening was drawing in, which made them afraid of staying on the island lest they be surprised by those who had escaped the slaughter. So they set fire to the cabins and rejoined their comrades.

Book Two

Thus the island became an inferno. But as long as the sun was in the sky, 1
Theagenes and Knemon were unaware of the catastrophe, for in the daytime firelight is dulled and outshone by the beams of the sun-god. But when sunset ushered in the night, the flames took on a glaring brilliance that lit the sky for miles around. Darkness brought confidence to the two Greeks; they emerged from their hiding place in the marsh, only to see the island by now well and truly in the grip of the blaze.

Theagenes smote his brow and tore his hair. "Let this day be my last!" he cried. "Let this be the end and undoing of all things—fear, danger, anxiety, hope, love. Charikleia is dead, and Theagenes is no more. Fate is against me. I played the coward, but in vain. In vain did I betray my manhood in abject flight, trying to save my life for your sake, my love. But, my darling, I shall not live if you are dead. The hardest thing to bear is that it was no natural death you died, that you did not breathe your last in the arms you would have wanted to enfold you as you died. Fire has consumed you; no wedding torches did heaven light for you, but these flames instead. That incomparable beauty has been reduced to ashes, so that not even your dead body remains to preserve a trace of your perfect loveliness. How cruel the divinity is! I cannot find words to express its jealous malice. Even a last embrace is denied me. I am cheated even of a final, lifeless kiss!"

With these words, he looked round for his sword. Quick as a flash, 2
Knemon knocked it from his hand. "What are you doing, Theagenes?" he cried. "Why mourn the living? Yes, Charikleia is alive. She is not dead! Take heart!"

But Theagenes replied; "Tell that to fools and children, Knemon. You have cheated me of the balm of death; you have done for me!"

Knemon, however, swore that he was speaking the truth and told him the whole story: Thyamis's command, the cave, how he had thrust Charikleia in with his own hands; he described the cave, adding that there was no likelihood of the fire having penetrated to its deepest re-

cesses, as the endlessly labyrinthine tunnels would have kept it at bay. At this Theagenes' spirits revived. Now he was in a hurry to get across to the island: Charikleia was not with him, but in his thoughts he saw her and pictured the cave to himself as a bridal chamber. Little did he know what sorrow awaited him there!

So they pushed off with a will, though they had to do their own rowing, as their boatman had flung himself over the side the moment the fighting started, as if the shouting had catapulted him overboard. This way and that they veered, for, having little skill in oarsmanship, they were not pulling together—and besides, there was a wind blowing
3 against them. However, their determination was more than a match for their incompetence, and eventually, though with some difficulty and much exertion, they managed to beach their boat on the island and ran as fast as they could to the cabins. They found them already reduced to ashes, identifiable only by their position; but the threshold stone that concealed the entrance to the cave was clearly visible.

The wind had got up behind the flames and blown them on to the huts, which, being flimsily constructed from woven reeds (from the marsh, of course), had been burned to ashes as the wind gusting past fanned the flames, leaving the ground more or less flat. The blaze had quickly burned itself out and died back to a bed of glowing embers, but most of the ash had then blown away in the strong wind, while the little that was left had been almost completely doused by the breeze and was now cool enough to walk on.

Knemon and Theagenes found some half-burned torches and scraps of reed, which they lit. They opened the entrance and hurried in, Knemon leading the way. They had gone only a few steps when Knemon suddenly cried out, "O Zeus, what is this? We are done for! Charikleia is dead!"

He dropped his torch to the ground, where it went out, and sank sobbing to his knees, his hands clasped over his eyes. As if pushed forcibly from behind, Theagenes sprawled over the body of the dead woman and lay pressing her to his bosom in a long, clinging embrace. Knemon sensed that he was conscious of nothing but his grief, that he was drowning in the sea of his troubles. Fearing that Theagenes might do himself some mischief, he stealthily removed the sword from the scabbard that hung at his friend's side, and then left him there alone while he hurried outside to rekindle the torches.

4 Meanwhile, Theagenes cried aloud in tragic sorrow; "Pain beyond enduring! Horror wrought by heaven's curse! What persecuting Fury was this that took such insatiable delight in our misery after imposing on us exile from our homeland, exposing us to peril on the sea, peril in pirate

lairs, throwing us upon the tender mercies of brigands, and more than once robbing us of all we had? One thing alone had it left me, and now that too has been snatched away! Charikleia is dead; my beloved has fallen victim to an enemy's hand. Obviously she was protecting her chastity and keeping herself for me. For me! She is no less dead for all that, poor girl! She had no joy of her beauty; nor did I. My darling, speak to me just once more as you used to. If you have an atom of breath left in you, tell me your last wishes. But alas! You do not speak. That prophetic, god-inspired voice is silent! Darkness has snuffed out the bringer of light! Oblivion shrouds the attendant of the inner shrine! Those eyes that dazzled everyone with their beauty have lost their light; your murderer did not see them, of that I am sure. What is one to call you? Bride? But you will never marry! Wife? But you are forever a virgin! What shall I call you? How shall I address you now? By the sweetest name of all—Charikleia! Rest easy, Charikleia. Your lover is true. Soon I shall be with you again. See, on your grave I shall pour a libation: my lifeblood; I shall offer you my blood, the blood you love. Here in this cave we shall lie: it will serve as our tomb. At least we shall be able to find union after death, even if heaven did not vouchsafe us it in life!"

With these words he reached down to draw his sword. It was gone! 5
"Knemon!" he cried, "you have done for me! And you have wronged Charikleia too by a second time depriving her of the company of the one she loves."

Even as he uttered these words, a voice came echoing back from the depths of the cave. "Theagenes," it called.

He was not in the least disconcerted. "I am coming, beloved spirit," he responded. "Evidently you still haunt the earth; you cannot bear to depart from the beautiful body from which you were forcibly expelled, or perhaps the ghosts of the underworld refuse you admittance because you are unburied."[33]

At that moment Knemon returned with a lighted torch. Again came the same voice, and again the word it spoke was "Theagenes."

"Gods above!" exclaimed Knemon. "That is Charikleia's voice, is it not? She is safe, I think, Theagenes! For the voice that falls upon my ears comes from the furthest depths of the cave, from the very part where I know I left her."

"I have had enough of your continual deceptions," replied Theagenes.

"If I am deceiving you," said Knemon, "I am deceiving myself as well, if it turns out that this dead woman is in fact Charikleia."

33. It was common belief that until the body was buried, the soul of the dead was not allowed to cross the rivers of the underworld and find its eternal resting place.

And with these words, he turned the body over to see its face. But at the sight of it he exclaimed: "What is this? O gods, you have brought about the impossible! This is Thisbe's face!"

He reeled backwards and stood shivering in dumb amazement. At this
6 turn of events, Theagenes, however, came to life and felt a new optimism. He brought Knemon round from his faint and begged him to lead the way to Charikleia as quickly as he could. Knemon took a moment to collect himself and then had another look at the body. It really was Thisbe! Beside her had fallen a sword, which he recognized by its hilt: Thyamis, in the haste of his passion, had left it in the body at the time of the murder. Protruding from her breast was a writing tablet that was tucked under her arm. Knemon picked it up and tried to make out what was written on it, but Theagenes was too pressing to let him read it. "Let us rescue my beloved first," he said, "in case even now some malign power is making fun of us. There will be plenty of time to read that later."

Knemon could see the sense of this. They picked up the sword and, taking the tablet with them, made their way quickly towards Charikleia, who had been crawling on her hands and knees towards the light. She ran to meet Theagenes and flung her arms around his neck.

"I have found you, Theagenes!" she said.

"You are alive, Charikleia!" he replied.

They continued in this vein, until in the end they collapsed, both at once, to the ground, where they lay clasped in a mute embrace that seemed to fuse their very beings—but brought them close to death. So it is that excess of joy has time and again turned to grief, that pleasure passing beyond its due proportion has given rise to self-induced sorrow. That is how it was with Theagenes and Charikleia: contrary to all expectations they had escaped death, but now they were in mortal danger, had not Knemon scratched in the earth to make a well of sorts and, cupping his hands to scoop up the moisture that trickled into it, splashed their faces and tickled their noses until they regained consciousness.

7 They came to to find themselves lying on the ground, which was not at all the posture of their meeting! They leapt to their feet, blushing (especially Charikleia) in shame that Knemon should have witnessed such an exhibition, and begged his forgiveness. But Knemon merely smiled and dispelled their anxiety by replying: "I thought your behavior was quite admirable—as would anyone else who has ever tasted the pleasure of defeat in a tussle with Love and meekly submitted to those holds of his from which there is no escape. But there was one thing, Theagenes, that I could not find it in myself to admire—to be honest, I found it a disgusting spectacle—and that was when you threw yourself onto a com-

plete and utter stranger and wept abjectly over her despite my protestations that your beloved was alive and safe!"

"Knemon," replied Theagenes, "please stop maligning me in front of Charikleia. I was weeping for her in another's body, for I thought that the dead woman was she. But now that some god has been kind enough to reveal that I was deceived, it is time for you to be reminded of your own remarkable display of bravery: you wept for my griefs before I did, and when you found that the dead woman was who you least expected it to be, you took to your heels as if she were some evil spirit in a play; though you were armed and had a sword in your hand, you fled from a woman, and a dead one at that! The intrepid Athenian warrior turned tail and ran!"

They laughed a little at this, but their laughter was forced and not 8
without sadness; in fact, naturally enough in such adversity, there was more grief than mirth in it. Charikleia paused a moment, then, scratching her cheek just beneath her ear, she said: "My felicitations to the woman Theagenes grieved for, or even, as Knemon said, kissed—whoever she may be. Please do not suppose that love is making me feel pangs of jealousy, but who was that lucky woman whom Theagenes favored with his tears? How were you misled into bestowing on this stranger kisses that were meant for me? I should dearly like to know the answers to these questions, if you have them!"

"This will surprise you," he replied. "Knemon here says she is Thisbe, that Athenian harp-girl who plotted the downfall of him and Demainete."

Charikleia was astounded. "It is not possible, Knemon!" she said. "How can someone suddenly be spirited away by a sort of theatrical special effect,[34] out of the heart of Greece to the remotest parts of Egypt? How did it happen that we did not meet her on our way down here?"

"That I cannot tell you," answered Knemon. "But what I do know of her story is this. After Demainete had been caught in Thisbe's trap and had thrown herself to her death in the Pit, my father reported to the assembly what had happened. Pardon was no sooner sought than given, whereupon he began to make arrangements for procuring the people's assent to my return and for undertaking a voyage to find me. He was so busy that Thisbe found herself with plenty of time on her hands and felt no compunction about hiring out herself and her musical talents for drinking parties. Eventually her nimble harp-playing and stylish singing to the lyre made her more in demand than Arsinoe, whose flute playing

34. Heliodoros here specifies the *mechane*, a sort of crane used in the fifth-century Athenian theater to stage the miraculous appearance of a god (*deus ex machina*) and for similar purposes.

was rather lackluster. Unawares she had made herself the object of a courtesan's bitter jealousy, the more so when she became the mistress of a rich merchant from Naukratis,[35] Nausikles by name, who had previously been Arsinoe's lover but had discarded her after seeing her playing the flute, her cheeks bulging with the force of her breath and grotesquely protruding as far as her nose, her eyes bloodshot and popping out of her head.

9 "In a boiling fever of jealous rage, Arsinoe approached Demainete's relations and told them of Thisbe's plot against her mistress, combining the suspicions she had formed herself with what Thisbe had told her as friend to friend. Demainete's family closed ranks against my father and at great expense secured the services of the most formidable public speakers to bring charges against him. They declared that Demainete had been killed without a trial and without a conviction; they maintained that the story of her adultery was merely a cover for her murder; they requested him to produce her lover, dead or alive, and insisted that he should at least reveal the lover's name; and finally they demanded Thisbe for interrogation under torture.[36] My father promised to hand her over to them, but was unable to do so, for Thisbe had foreseen this turn of events before the case even came to court, and had made a compact to elope with her merchant. The people now lost their temper with my father. He was convicted not of murder, for he was able to give a full account of what had happened, but he was adjudged to have been an accessory to the intrigue against Demainete and to my wrongful banishment; he was exiled from the city, and his property was confiscated. Such was the joy that his second marriage had brought him!

"And so it was that Thisbe—curse her!—set sail from Athens; now, before my very eyes, she has paid the penalty for her crimes. More than that I do not know; this much was told me in Aigina by a man called Antikles, with whom I later sailed to Egypt, hoping to discover Thisbe at Naukratis and take her back to Athens so as to put an end to the suspicions and allegations against my father and demand justice for the intrigues against my whole family. And now here I am, facing the same predicament as you! Why and how this came about, all my adventures in the meantime, I shall tell you some other time. How Thisbe came to be in the cave, and who killed her here, we may never know, unless some
10 god reveals the answers to us. But perhaps we should take a close look at the writing tablet that we found in her bosom. It probably has something further to tell us."

35. A Greek city in Egypt which became the sole channel for Greek commerce in Egypt soon after 570 B.C. under the pharaoh Amasis.

36. The regular way of obtaining evidence from slaves; they were presumed to be naturally liars, who would not tell the truth except under duress.

They agreed that they should. Knemon opened the tablet[37] and began to read. This is what was written there.

> To Knemon, my lord and master, from your enemy and benefactress, Thisbe. First I have some good news for you: Demainete is dead. It was I who brought this about, out of love for you. How it happened I shall tell you face-to-face if you will agree to see me. Next I bring you the news that I have been on this island for ten days now, the captive of one of the bandits who live here; he boasts that he is their captain's right-hand man. He is keeping me under lock and key and does not allow me even to put my head outside the door, claiming that he has incarcerated me like this because he loves me, though in my estimation he is afraid that someone might take me away from him. But by the grace of some god I saw you walk past, my lord, and I recognized you. I am sending you this tablet secretly, by way of the old woman who shares my dwelling. She has instructions to deliver it into the hand of the captain's handsome Greek friend. Deliver me from the clutches of these brigands! Do not abandon your servant! Help me, please; for the wrongs I appear to have done I was compelled to do, but the revenge I took on your enemy I took voluntarily. But if you are too full of anger to heed my prayers, then vent your hatred on me however you please. My one wish is to be yours, even if it means my death. Better to die at your hands and be buried like a Greek than to endure a life worse than death and suffer the torment of a savage's love, which causes me, as an Athenian, more pain than any hatred.

Such was the information that Thisbe gave of herself on the tablet. 11
"Thisbe," said Knemon, "I am glad you are dead, that you were yourself the messenger who brought us word of your misfortunes, for it was your very corpse that delivered your narrative to us! It seems indeed that an avenging Fury pursued you over all the world and did not still her whip of Justice until she had brought you to Egypt, where I, the victim of your crimes, happened to be, and presented me with the spectacle of the retribution she exacted from you. I wonder what new scheme you were concocting against me beneath the cloak of this letter, when Justice preempted your plans with death. Even dead I regard you with suspicion, and I am haunted by the fear that the story of Demainete's death is untrue, that the friends who brought me the news were deceiving me, and that you have come across the sea to make me the victim of another Attic tragedy, but in an Egyptian setting!"

37. A writing tablet consisted of two pieces of wood coated with wax and hinged together so that they could be closed to protect the inscribed wax.

"Enough," exclaimed Theagenes, "of your superhuman courage! And of your dread of ghosts and phantoms! You cannot say that Thisbe has cast a spell on me and my power of sight, for I have no part in your tragedy. She is well and truly dead, I assure you. So take heart on that score at least, Knemon! But what puzzles and astounds me most is this: who could this friend and benefactor of yours possibly be who slew her? How and when had she been brought down into this cave?"

"All I can say with any certainty," replied Knemon, "is that the person who killed her was Thyamis, if we are to judge by the sword that we found beside the body. I recognize it as his by this device of an eagle carved on the ivory hilt."

"So," asked Theagenes, "can you say how he committed this murder—and from what motive?"

"How should I know?" he replied. "This cave has not given me the power of second sight, like the shrine of Pytho!"[38]

Theagenes and Charikleia gave a sudden cry of sorrow. "O Pytho! O Delphi!" they sobbed. Knemon was quite startled and had no idea why they should be so affected by the name of Pytho.

12 Meanwhile, Thermouthis, Thyamis's henchman, who had swum to land after being wounded, had, after the fall of night, discovered a boat from the wreckage drifting around the marsh. He clambered in and at that very moment was hastening towards the island to find Thisbe.

A few days previously, while she had been traveling in the company of Nausikles the merchant, Thermouthis had waylaid them on a narrow road through the foothills and carried her off. In the confusion of the battle that followed the enemy's assault, he had been sent by Thyamis to fetch the victim for sacrifice and had taken the chance to put Thisbe where no weapon could touch her, hoping to keep her alive for himself. No one had seen him as he shut her in the cave, but in his frantic haste he had left her close by the entrance. Once sealed in, Thisbe had not ventured far from the cave mouth, for she was terrified by her predicament and had no knowledge of the paths that led to the depths of the cave; there Thyamis had found here and slain her in the belief that she was Charikleia.

It was to Thisbe that Thermouthis was hurrying, confident that she had escaped the perils of war. He landed on the island and ran as fast as his legs would carry him to the huts, of which nothing now remained but ashes. With some difficulty Thermouthis located the entrance to the cave by the stone that lay across it. Making a torch from the few, still smoldering reeds that were left, he scrambled down into the cave as quickly as he could, calling Thisbe by name—for her name was the one

38. An archaic and poetic name for the sanctuary at Delphi, where Apollo killed the serpent Python.

word of Greek he knew. But the sight of her dead body struck him dumb. A long time he stood there, but eventually he became aware of the hum and murmur of voices floating upwards from the bowels of the cave, for Theagenes and Knemon were still engaged in conversation. He concluded that these were Thisbe's murderers, but now he was in a quandary: on the one hand he had the hot blood of all brigands and the quick temper of all savages, which, aggravated by his frustrated passion, impelled him to close with the supposed culprits there and then; on the other hand he had no weapon, no sword. Reluctantly he was constrained to control his impulses: better, he thought, to conceal his hostile intentions for the first encounter, then to wreak vengeance on his foes the moment he could lay his hands on a weapon. Thus resolved, he presented himself to Theagenes and the others. But the wild and cruel way he regarded them made all too plain the purpose hidden in his heart. 13

At the unexpected appearance of this naked, wounded man with blood streaming down his face, Charikleia withdrew into the bowels of the cave, partly from caution perhaps, but mainly because her modesty was offended by the naked and indecent appearance of this new arrival. Knemon also took a step or two backwards, for he recognized Thermouthis, whom he had not expected to see and who he thought might turn nasty. But Theagenes was undismayed at the sight. Indeed, it spurred him to action, and he brandished his sword, ready to strike Thermouthis dead if he tried anything untoward.

"Stay where you are!" he cried, "or you are a dead man! The only reason you are not already dead is that you seem vaguely familiar and your intentions are not yet clear."

Thermouthis fell pleading at his feet, but his supplication was the product of circumstances rather than of natural inclination. He entreated Knemon to come to his assistance and said it would be wrong for them to take his life; he meant them no harm, he maintained: he had always been a friend of theirs before the day of the attack, and it was as friends that he had come to them now.

These protestations had their effect on Knemon. He stepped forward 14
and helped Thermouthis, who was clinging to Theagenes' knees,[39] to his feet, plying him with questions as to the whereabouts of Thyamis. Thermouthis told the whole story: how he had closed with the foe and hurled himself into their midst, fighting with no quarter for them and no thought for himself; how he slew all who came within his reach but was himself under the protection of a strict order that no one was to lay a finger on Thyamis. He could not say what had become of Thyamis in the end, but he himself had managed to swim to land despite his wounds

39. The classic posture of supplication.

and now had come to the cave in search of Thisbe. In response to their questions as to what interest he had in Thisbe and how she came to be the object of his search, Thermouthis went on to relate how he had stolen her from merchants and fallen madly in love with her, how he had kept her hidden right up to the time of the enemy attack, when he had concealed her in the cave, only to return now to find her slain by persons unknown, whose identity he would dearly like to learn so as to discover why they had done this thing.

In his eagerness to exculpate himself, Knemon blurted out with unseemly haste, "It was Thyamis who killed her!" And to prove it he held up the sword that they had found at the scene of the crime. When Thermouthis saw the blade still dripping with gore, dribbling blood so recently shed that it was still warm, he knew it belonged to Thyamis and groaned from the depth of his being. Unable to account for what had happened, he made his way back up to the entrance of the cave in stunned silence, and when he came to the dead girl's body, he laid his head on her breast and murmured, "Thisbe, my Thisbe!" Over and over he intoned her name; no other words could he find, until, dividing the word into separate syllables and pronouncing it less and less distinctly, he lulled himself to sleep.

15 Theagenes and Charikleia, and Knemon too, suddenly took stock of all the troubles that beset them. They seemed to want to form a plan, but the extent of their past woes, the hopelessness of their present predicament, the uncertainty of the future, clouded their intellects. For a long time they stared at one another, each expecting the other to speak; but meeting only with silence, they averted their eyes towards the ground, then raised their heads and drew a deep breath, easing with a sigh the pain that pressed heavy on their hearts. Finally Knemon lay down on the ground, Theagenes slumped onto a rock, and Charikleia flung herself on top of him. For as long as they could they kept at bay the sleep that assailed them, for they wanted desperately to devise a strategy against their present plight; but eventually they were compelled to obey the law of nature and yield to their lassitude and fatigue. They slipped into a sweet slumber, so intense was their sorrow. Thus it is that sometimes the conscious mind consents to accede to bodily pain.

16 But only a few moments' sleep were they able to snatch, and scarcely had their weary eyelids closed, when a dream of the following form appeared to Charikleia: a man with matted hair, with cunning in his eyes and blood on his hands, with one stroke of his sword struck out her right eye, whereupon she screamed and called to Theagenes, saying that her eye had been plucked out. No sooner did she call than he was at her side, in as much anguish at her distress as if he shared even her dreams.

Charikleia put her hand to her face and felt all over to find what she had lost in her dream. But it was only a dream.

"It was only a dream," she said. "My eye is still there. It is all right, Theagenes."

At these words, Theagenes heaved a sigh of relief. "I am glad that your eyes still shine with a radiance as bright as the sun," he said. "But tell me what has happened to you. What was it that so terrified you?"

"A wicked, evil-hearted man, undaunted even by your invincible strength, tried to ravish me as I slept on your knees, and I dreamt that he put out my right eye with the sword he held in his hand. I wish that the apparition had been real, Theagenes, and not a mere dream!"

"Do not speak such wickedness!" he exclaimed, and asked her why she said such a thing.

"Because," she answered, "I should prefer to have lost one of my eyes than to feel such dread for your sake. I have a horrible fear that you might be the object of my dream, for I count you my eye, my soul, my all."

"Enough of such talk!" interrupted Knemon, who, having been awakened from his sleep by Charikleia's initial scream, had overheard this entire exchange. "It seems plain to me that the dream has a quite different meaning. Answer me this: Are your parents still alive?"

"Yes," she replied, "if ever they were."

"Then you must presume that your father is dead," said Knemon. "The way I reach this conclusion is as follows. We all know that our parents are responsible for our coming into the world and partaking of the light of day. So it is not implausible for dreams to use our two eyes to symbolize our mother and father, for it is through them that we perceive the light and are presented with images of the visible world."[40]

"Even this is bad news," said Charikleia, "but I would rather your version were true than the alternative. May the tripod that inspires you to oracular utterance[41] prevail, and I be exposed as a false prophet."

"It will be as I say," said Knemon. "Have no doubt. But we really do seem to be in a dreamworld! Here we are analyzing dreams and figments of the imagination and not pausing for a moment to think how to solve our own problems! This is the ideal opportunity, too, while this

40. The interpretation of dreams was a developed art in antiquity. Identical reasoning and significance for the loss of the right eye are to be found in the standard textbook on the subject, Artemidoros's *Oneirokritika* (1.26).

41. The Delphic priestess delivered her oracles seated on a tripod sacred to the oracular god Apollo, from which she was supposed to derive her mantic inspiration. Originally this simply made visible her role as the god's proxy, but later ages devised a more "scientific" view of the priestess perching on her tripod above a chasm from which issued intoxicating vapors. This is pure fiction.

Egyptian"—he was referring to Thermouthis—"is out of the way, indulging in romantic fantasies about the dead and weeping over the body of his beloved."

17 "Very well, Knemon," retorted Theagenes. "Some god has brought us together and made you our companion in adversity, so let us hear your advice first. You know these parts and speak the language; and besides, we are sunk deep in a flood of misfortunes greater than yours, and our wits are too dulled to know what is required."

Knemon paused a moment before replying: "I am not sure whose misfortune is the greater, Theagenes. The divinity has been no niggard in filling my cup of misery, too. But you asked me, as the elder, to say something about our position. This is how I see it: this island, as you see, is completely deserted, apart from us. There is gold, silver, and clothing aplenty, for Thyamis and his men stole these things in great quantities from you and other victims of their banditry. But of food and other necessities there is not so much as a whisper left. If we stay here, we are in danger of starving to death, and also of becoming the victims of an attack either by the enemy, who may return, or by our erstwhile colleagues, who may regroup and be drawn back by the treasure that they know is here. In that case we should be killed before we could escape, or else (and this is the best treatment we could hope for) we should find ourselves at the mercy of their brutality. These Herdsmen are a treacherous crew, particularly now that they have lost their leader, who was able to exert a moderating influence on them. This island is a trap, a prison cell: we must get away from it; but first let us get rid of Thermouthis on the pretext of sending him off to make inquiries and busy himself trying to find some news of Thyamis. It would be easier to make our plans and carry them out without him; and anyway it would be good to be rid of a man who is congenitally unreliable and has the acrimonious temperament of all brigands, particularly as he harbors some suspicion against us over Thisbe, which he will not let drop until he has perpetrated some villainy—should the opportunity arise."

18 Knemon's plan met with their approval, and they decided to act upon it. They could already see the first glimmers of dawn, so they hurried back to the mouth of the cave, where they found Thermouthis sound asleep. They woke him and told him as much of their intentions as they thought he should know; he was a rather gullible individual, and they had no difficulty in convincing him. They laid Thisbe's body in a hole and, in place of earth, sprinkled ash from the huts over her. For piety's sake they performed the customary offices as best the occasion allowed, offering tears and mourning in place of all the proper funeral sacrifices. Then they sent Thermouthis off on the errand they had planned for him, but after a few steps he turned back and refused to go by himself or to

undertake such a dangerous reconnaissance unless Knemon was prepared to accompany him on this mission. Knemon's dismay as he reported the Egyptian's words was all too plain, and Theagenes could see that he had no stomach for the task.

"Your intellect may be formidable, but your heart is puny," he said, "as your present behavior reveals more plainly than ever! Sharpen your resolve! Lift up your heart and act like a man! For the moment I think you have no choice but to agree to his demands, or he may begin to suspect that we are planning to steal away. You must go along with him for the first part of the way. He is completely unarmed, while you have a sword and armor to protect you; so you have absolutely no reason to be afraid of going with him. Then, at the first opportunity, you can sneak away and leave him to his fate, and join us at some agreed place. If you have no objection, let us agree upon some village near here. Do you know one where the people are friendly?"

Knemon thought this was good advice and suggested a village called Chemmis,[42] a prosperous and populous settlement on a hill by the banks of the Nile, which served as a stronghold against the Herdsmen; it was about eleven miles distant, he said, once they had crossed the lake; they must head due south.

"It will not be easy," answered Theagenes, "at least for Charikleia, 19
who is not used to walking long distances. All the same we shall get there. We shall disguise ourselves as beggars, vagabonds who beg for a living."

"Of course!" said Knemon. "Your faces are hideously ugly, Charikleia's even more so now she has just had her eye cut out! It seems to me that beggars like you will not ask for scraps but for swords and cauldrons!"[43]

This brought a smile to their faces, but it was forced and did not come from the heart. After confirming under oath that they would do as they had agreed and calling on the gods to witness their vows that they would never of their own free will forsake one another, they began to put their plan into effect.

At daybreak Knemon and Thermouthis crossed the lake and started to make their way through a thick wood, so overgrown as to be virtually impenetrable. Thermouthis led the way, at the suggestion of Knemon, who employed Thermouthis's knowledge of the difficult terrain as a pre-

42. Apparently invented; the name is authentically Egyptian, but neither of the two places for which it is attested would suit this context.

43. This reverses *Odyssey* 17.222, where Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, is described by the arrogant Melanthios as "begging only for handouts, never for swords or cauldrons" (the kind of thing that any self-respecting member of epic society would desire as a gift of friendship). Knemon means that, despite their disguise, Theagenes and Charikleia will appear too noble for beggars.

text for letting him go first, though in reality he was making sure of his own safety and engineering an opportunity to make good his escape. On their way they came across a flock of sheep, whose shepherds ran off and hid in the thicker part of the forest. They slaughtered one of the rams that led the flock and greedily devoured the meat, which they roasted over the fire the shepherds had already built; but their hunger was so ravenous that they could not even wait for the meat to be cooked properly. So, like wolves or jackals,[44] they gobbled each morsel as it was cut from the carcass, though the fire had barely had time to singe it; and as they ate, the blood from the half-cooked flesh dribbled down their cheeks. Their appetites sated, they took a drink of milk before pressing on with their journey.

Now it was about the time when oxen are unyoked after a day's ploughing,[45] when Thermouthis said that on the other side of the ridge they were climbing was the village where he thought Thyamis was being detained after his capture, unless he had already been put to death there. At this moment Knemon began to complain that he had eaten too much and had a stomachache, adding that the milk was causing him terrible diarrhea. He told Thermouthis to go on ahead and said he would catch up with him. By repeating this performance a second and a third time, he convinced Thermouthis that he was in earnest, and said that he had been hard put to it to catch up with him again. Eventually the Egyptian grew so used to Knemon's disappearing that he failed to notice that he had not returned—actually he was making good his escape, careering full tilt down the hillside to where the wood was too thick for anyone to follow him.

20 When Thermouthis reached the top of the hill, he sat down on a rock to rest and wait for nightfall, for they had agreed to enter the village after dark and start probing for information about Thyamis. He kept a constant watch for Knemon, from whatever direction he might appear, for he was plotting mischief against him. There still lingered in his mind the suspicion that it was Knemon who had killed Thisbe, and he was considering how he might dispose of him; then, with Knemon out of the way, he had deranged visions of attacking Theagenes and Charikleia too. However, Knemon was nowhere to be seen, and it was now the dead of night. Thermouthis lay down to sleep, but the sleep he slept was the final sleep, the brazen sleep of death, for he was bitten by a viper. Perhaps it was destiny's will that his life should end in a way so befitting his character.[46]

44. Heliodoros is here turning two Homeric similes into narrative: see *Iliad* 16.156ff. and 11.474ff.

45. An epic way of telling the time: see *Iliad* 16.779 and *Odyssey* 9.58.

46. According to Aelian (*Nature of Animals* 10.31), there was a variety of asp that the Egyptians called *thermouthis*, whose bite was supposed to be fatal only to the wicked. So there is a peculiar aptness in the manner of Thermouthis's death.

From the moment he deserted Thermouthis, Knemon kept running and did not stop to take breath until night fell and the darkness put a brake on his haste. He concealed himself just where he was when the night overtook him, heaping as many leaves as he could over himself.[47] And beneath his blanket of leaves he spent a miserable night. He hardly slept at all: every sound, every gust of wind, every rustling leaf he thought was Thermouthis; and if ever, in spite of himself, he fell asleep for a moment, he dreamed he was running, constantly turning back and looking over his shoulder for a pursuer who was not there. And though he longed to sleep, he prayed that the gods would not grant him what he longed to have, for his dreams were even less pleasant than the reality. He felt it was the longest night there had ever been, and he seemed ready to curse it for being so protracted, but at length, to his great relief, day dawned. First, so as not to inspire terror or distrust among those he met, he trimmed his hair, which he had grown long among the Herdsmen so as to look more the part of a brigand. The Herdsmen cultivate an alarming appearance, particularly as regards their hair, which they pull forward to meet their eyebrows and toss violently as it falls over their shoulders, for they are well aware that long hair makes lovers seem more alluring but robbers more alarming. But even a dandy will wear his hair 21
shorter than a bandit, and it was to this measure that Knemon trimmed his, before pressing on with all speed towards Chemmis, the village where he and Theagenes had agreed they should meet.

As he drew close to the Nile, which he had to cross to reach Chemmis, he saw an old man walking aimlessly along the riverbank, pacing to and fro, to and fro, beside the river, like an athlete in a long-distance race running length after length of the track, apparently confiding his cares to the river. His hair was long, like a priest's, and pure white; his beard grew long and thick, lending him an air of dignity, while his cloak and the rest of his clothes were of a Greekish appearance. Knemon waited a moment, but the old man continued striding to and fro, so entirely wrapped up in his thoughts, his mind so closed to everything but his reflections, that he seemed not even to be aware that he was not alone, until Knemon stood full in front of him and opened the conversation by bidding him good day.

The old man replied that he could not have a good day, since fate refused to grant him one.

"This stranger is a Greek!" exclaimed Knemon in astonishment.

"No, not a Greek," said the other. "I come from hereabouts. I am an Egyptian."

"How do you come to be dressed like a Greek then?"

"I owe this fine change of clothes to my misfortunes!"

47. Knemon in his bed of leaves is intended to recall Odysseus in his, after his shipwreck at the end of the fifth book of the *Odyssey*.

Astonished that anyone should be prompted to dress up in bright apparel by his sorrows, Knemon asked the old man to tell him what these misfortunes were.

"It is an Odyssey of woe,"[48] came the reply. "You are disturbing a hornets' nest of sufferings that will buzz and drone in your ears for an eternity. But where are you off to, young man? Where have you come from? How does a man who speaks Greek come to be in Egypt?"

"This is ridiculous!" exclaimed Knemon. "You have told me nothing about yourself, even though I asked first, and now you want to know my story!"

"Well, then," said the other, "you seem to be a Greek, compelled by fate, no doubt, to disguise yourself thus. You have an irresistible desire to hear my story, and I am desperate to tell it to someone—if I had not met you, I might even have told it to these reeds, as in the myth.[49] So, let us leave the Nile and its banks, for a spot under the scorching midday sun is not the most agreeable of places for listening to long tales. Let us adjourn to the village that you can see on the other bank, unless you have more pressing business. I cannot offer you the hospitality of my own house, but I shall entertain you in the home of a good man who has given me sanctuary. There you can hear my story if you wish and tell me yours in return."

"Let us go," said Knemon. "I am anxious to reach the village in any case, as I have arranged to wait for some dear friends there."

22 So they clambered into one of the small boats that were moored in great numbers along the bank waiting to ply for hire across the river, and crossed to the village on the other side. On reaching the lodgings where the old man was staying, they found that the master of the house was not at home, but they were given the warmest of welcomes by their host's daughter, a young lady of marriageable age, and by all the serving women of the house, who treated their guest just like a father, for such, I imagine, had been their master's instructions. While one washed his feet and cleaned the dust from the lower part of his legs, another busied herself with the couch, making sure that it was comfortable for him to lie on; a third brought a jug of water and lit a fire, while a fourth came in with a table set high with wheat bread and all sorts of seasonal fruit.

48. Literally "you are carrying me from Troy," an allusion to the words with which Odysseus begins his retrospective narrative in the *Odyssey* (9.39).

49. Midas, king of Phrygia, had to judge a musical contest between Apollo and Pan. Having declared Pan the winner, he was punished by Apollo, who gave him ass's ears in token of his lack of musical discrimination. The only person to know about the king's ears was the royal barber, who, unable to keep the secret, whispered it into a hole in the ground. However, the reeds that grew when the hole was filled in whispered the story whenever the wind blew through them. See Ovid *Metamorphoses* 11.153ff.

Knemon exclaimed in amazement, "We seem to have come to the court of Zeus, the God of Hospitality, so generous and obviously full of affection has been our reception!"

"Not to the court of Zeus," replied the old man, "but to the house of a man who is scrupulous in his respect of Zeus, the God of Hospitality and Supplication. He is a merchant, my son, and, like me, leads a nomadic existence; he has visited many cities and seen into the hearts and minds of many men. For this reason, I suppose, he has opened his house to many people, including myself just a few days ago when I was lost and in despair."

"What do you mean when you say you were lost, Father?"

"Robbers have taken my children. I know who they are who do me wrong, but there is nothing I can do in retaliation. So I hover around this place trying to assuage my sorrow with tears. I suppose I am rather like a bird whose nest is plundered and chicks devoured by a snake before her very eyes; she dare not go near but cannot bear to fly away; her heart is torn between desire and despair, and she twitters and flutters around the sack of her home, but her pleas and the grief she feels for her young are wasted on cruel ears that nature has left unacquainted with compassion."[50]

"Would you like to tell me how and when you fell victim to this atrocity?" asked Knemon.

"Later," he answered. "Now it is time to attend to the stomach. Homer knew how the belly subordinates everything to itself, and that is what he had in mind when, in that memorable passage, he called it 'accursed.'[51] But first we must make our libation to the gods according to the custom of the wise men of Egypt. Even hunger could not induce me to neglect this observance. May my grief never be so great as to make me forget my duty to the divine."

With these words he poured from his drinking bowl a libation of the 23
water, unmixed with wine, that formed his drink, and said, "Let us make this offering to the gods of this land and of Greece, particularly Pythian Apollo, and also to Theagenes and Charikleia, the noble and fair, for they count as gods in my book." And as he spoke, he wept, and his tears were like a second libation he poured them.

50. This simile derives ultimately from the description of an omen of a snake eating a nest of birds in the *Iliad* (2.311ff.), but Heliodoros's immediate inspiration seems to have been a passage from *Megara* (21ff.), a poem attributed to Moschos:

> But even as a bird that waileth upon her young ones' perishing when her babes be devoured one by one of a dire serpent in the thicket, and flies to and fro, the poor raving mother screaming above her children, and cannot go near to aid them for her own great terror of that remorseless monster. (J. M. Edmonds trans.)

51. The word is quoted from *Odyssey* 17.287; but cf. *Iliad* 19.155ff., 19.216ff; *Odyssey* 7.215ff.

At the sound of those names Knemon froze. He looked the old man up and down and asked: "What do you mean? Are Theagenes and Charikleia really your children?"

"They are my children," he replied, "though they were born to me motherless, since it is by chance that the gods have declared them mine. They are the offspring of my soul's agony, and the love I have for them in my heart has made them as the children of my flesh. For this reason they have come to look on me and talk of me as their father. But tell me, please, how you come to have made their acquaintance."

"Not only have I made their acquaintance," replied Knemon, "but I am the bringer of good news: they are alive and safe."

"Apollo!" exclaimed the old man. "And gods! Where in the world are they? Tell me. I shall account you my savior and on a level with the gods."

"What shall I gain from it?"

"For the moment, my gratitude," he answered, "which I think any man with any sense would consider the finest gift that friendship can offer. I know of many men who have locked it away in their hearts as if it were a priceless treasure. But if we reach the land of my birth—which the gods foretoken will soon come to pass—you shall drink as deep as you may at the well of wealth."

"What you promise is far in the future and uncertain," said Knemon, "though you have the wherewithal to pay me now."

"If you see anything here, name it. I should even be prepared to give you part of my body!"

"There is no need for the amputation of any limbs! I shall consider myself paid in full if you would consent to tell me all about them—where they come from, who their parents are, how they came here, what adventures they have had."

"Very well," replied the old man, "though there is no greater reward you could have requested, even if you had demanded all the money in the world. But first let us take a little sustenance, for a long task lies ahead of us—for you to listen to the tale, and for me to tell it."

So they ate a meal of nuts, figs, dates fresh from the tree, and other fruits of this kind, which formed the old man's customary diet, for he refused to take the life of any living thing for the sake of food; he washed his food down with water; Knemon, with wine. After a short pause Knemon said, "You know, Father, how Dionysos delights in stories and enjoys an entertaining tale. Now the god has taken up residence in me,[52]

52. Dionysos, as god of wine, is now metaphorically present inside Knemon, who has had a drink. The telling of stories was a staple form of entertainment at drinking parties, but Knemon, as a good Athenian, is also playing on the fact that Dionysos was patron of the dramatic festivals at Athens.

easing my heart and putting me in a mood for listening; and he is pressing me to demand the payment you promised. The time has come for you to set the stage and present your tale."

"Hear it you shall," replied the old man, "but I wish my friend Nausikles could have been here with us. Time and again he has pestered me to initiate him into my secrets, but I have always found some excuse to postpone my narrative."

"Where might he be at the moment?" asked Knemon, for he recog- 24
nized the name of Nausikles.

"He has gone hunting."

Knemon asked what game he was hunting, and the old man replied: "The most dangerous of all beasts: men they are called, Herdsmen, though the life they lead is one of brigandry, and it is almost impossible to run them to ground, as they retreat into their dens and lairs in the marsh."

"What complaint does he have against them?"

"The theft of an Athenian girl with whom he was in love. He said her name was Thisbe."

Knemon gasped and suddenly fell silent, as though he had had to check himself from saying more.

"What is wrong?" asked the old man, but Knemon changed the subject.

"I am wondering how he came to conceive the plan of attacking them and what force of arms he has to rely on."

"My friend," explained the old man, "the Great King's satrap[53] in Egypt is Oroondates; by his ordinance Mitranes, a commander of guards, has been assigned this village, and Nausikles has paid him a large sum of money to accompany him with a large detachment of cavalry and men-at-arms. He is smarting at the theft of his Athenian girl, not just because he loves her or because she is an excellent musician, but because, so he said, he intended to take her to the king of Ethiopia to be his wife's confidante and companion in things Greek. Having been robbed of the large profit he expected her to bring him, he is now setting in motion every available expedient to get her back. I must confess that I encouraged him in this undertaking, hoping against hope that he might also save my children's lives."

"Let us have no more of Herdsmen, or satraps or Great Kings either!" interrupted Knemon. "You very nearly succeeded in bringing me straight to the ending of the story with your talk, before I realized what you were up to, wheeling on this subplot which, so the saying goes, has

53. The Great King is the king of Persia. Egypt was conquered by Kambyses in 525 B.C. and became a satrapy, or province, of the Persian Empire, governed by a satrap, or viceroy.

nothing to do with Dionysos.[54] So take your narrative back to what you promised. So far I have found you just like Proteus of Pharos, not that you take on false and shifting forms as he did, but you are forever trying to lead me in the wrong direction!"[55]

"Very well," said the old man. "But first I shall tell you briefly about myself. This is not, as you think, a sophist's trick to avoid telling the story, but the logical way to present my narrative and an indispensable preliminary.

"My home is Memphis. My name is Kalasiris,[56] as was my father's before me. Now I lead the life of a rover, but it was not always so: once I was a high priest. By the law of my city I took a wife, and by the law of nature I lost her. After her release from this life, I lived untroubled for some time, complacently proud of the two sons she had borne me; but before many years had passed the preordained celestial cycle of the stars turned the wheel of our fortunes; the eye of Kronos lit upon my house and brought a change for the worse.[57] My science had given me warning of this, but not the ability to escape it, for while it is possible to foresee the immutable dispensations of Fate, it is not permitted to evade them. Insofar as such circumstances admit a comfort, it is foreknowledge that dulls the agony of misfortune; for in calamity, my child, what is unexpected is unbearable, since it reduces the mind to cringing terror; but what is foreknown is easier to endure, since we can think rationally about it, and by becoming accustomed to the prospect of disaster we are better able to handle it.

25 "In my case this is what occurred. A Thracian woman, in the full bloom of youth, second in beauty only to Charikleia, Rhodopis by name,[58] was touring Egypt. I know not whence or how she came there, but she brought evil to all she met, until one day she came carousing into Memphis with every imaginable luxury and extravagance in her train. She was fully equipped for the sexual hunt: any man who crossed her path was trapped, for there was no escaping or resisting the net of sensuality that she trailed from her eyes. She became a frequent visitor to the

54. A proverbial phrase, meaning "not to the point." Heliodoros is here playing with theatrical terms, alluding in particular to the *ekkyklema,* a kind of trolley used to reveal interior scenes by literally wheeling them on stage.

55. A sea god with the power of changing shape. Menelaos in the *Odyssey* (4.383ff.) could only make him reveal his secrets by holding onto him tightly through all his shifts of form.

56. An Egyptian word that Herodotos refers to a long linen garment (2.81) and also to one section of the warrior caste (2.164).

57. Kronos, father of Zeus, was identified with the Roman Saturn. The eye of Kronos is a poetic way of describing the planet Saturn, whose malign influence was generally recognized by astrologers.

58. A famous and historical courtesan of Naukratis, whose story is told by Herodotos (2.134–35). She was loved by Charaxos, brother of the poetess Sappho, which would make her career predate the Persian occupation of Egypt by fifty years or so.

temple of Isis where I was high priest, performing constant devotions to the goddess with hugely expensive sacrifices and dedications.

"It shames me to tell you this, but tell it I shall. The constant sight of her proved too much even for me; the self-control I had practiced all my life fell before her assault. For a long time I pitted the eyes of my soul against the eyes of my flesh, but in the end I had to admit defeat and sank beneath the weight of carnal passion. This woman, I discovered, was the start of the ordeals that heaven had predicted awaited me; it was clear to me that she was but acting a part in the drama of destiny, a mask, as it were, worn by the malign power that guided my fate at that time.[59] I decided not to bring disgrace on the priesthood with which I had grown up, resolved not to defile the gods' temples and precincts. I referred my case to the court of reason and imposed upon myself a penalty that befitted the sins I had committed not in fact (heaven forfend!) but merely in inclination. Exile was the sentence I pronounced on my concupiscence, and so, driven by relentless fate, I left the land of my birth.

"In doing so I was not only surrendering to the decrees of destiny and entrusting my fate to its whims, but also escaping from that abomination, Rhodopis. You see, my friend, I was afraid that under the pressure of the star that was then in the ascendant I might be driven against my will actually to perform acts of shamelessness. But, above and besides all else, it was my children who were the cause of my exile, for the god-sent wisdom of which I may not speak predicted to me on many occasions that they would take up swords and fight one another. Even the sun, I think, would hide his beams in cloud and turn away from so cruel a sight; and it was in an attempt to avoid seeing it, to spare a father's eyes the spectacle of his sons' fratricide, that I banished myself from the home and land of my fathers. I told no one of my departure, but pretended that I was making a visit to Great Thebes to see the elder of my two sons, who at that time was living there with his grandfather. His name, my friend, was Thyamis."

Again Knemon started back: the name of Thyamis rang in his ears like a blow to the head, but he checked himself from speaking, for he wanted to hear what came next. Kalasiris went on as follows.

"I shall say nothing of my ensuing travels, for they have no bearing 26
on what you want to know, my young friend. But I learned that in Greece there was a city called Delphi, sacred to Apollo but a holy place for the other gods too, a retreat where philosophers could work far from the madding crowd. Here I made my way, for it seemed to me that a town devoted to holy rites and ceremonies was a place of refuge well suited to a member of the priestly caste.

59. Greek drama was performed by actors wearing masks. Rhodopis is nothing more than a supernatural power acting out a part in the drama of destiny.

"I sailed along the Krisaian Gulf and came to anchor at Kirrhaia, where I left my ship and hastened up to the city. As I entered the town, the place's own oracular voice sang in my ears in tones that truly were heaven-sent. The city seemed like an abode fit for the lords of heaven, especially as regards the nature of its surroundings: Parnassos towers above the city exactly like a fortress or a natural citadel, enfolding the town in the fond embrace of its foothills."

"An excellent description!" exclaimed Knemon. "You have truly felt the breath of the oracle's inspiration. It was exactly so that my father described the setting of Delphi to me when the city of Athens sent him as a representative to the Holy Council."[60]

"Were you from Athens then, my boy?"

"Yes indeed," replied Knemon.

"What is your name?"

"Knemon," he answered. "I shall tell you more about myself another time, but now please go on with your story."

"I shall," said Kalasiris, returning to Delphi. "After admiring the town with its streets, squares, and fountains and visiting the famous spring of Kastalia, with whose waters I performed the ritual of ablution, I hastened to the temple in a state of high excitement, for the crowd was abuzz with the rumor that it was time for the prophetess to awake. I entered the temple, and as I knelt in private prayer, the Pythian priestess broke into speech.

> From Nile's corn-rich banks your path has led
> As you flee from far-reaching Fate's spun thread.
> Fear not. The hour is near when I shall lead you home
> To black-soiled Egypt. For now, friend, welcome!

27 "When she had delivered this oracle, I prostrated myself on the altar and besought the god's favor in all things. The large crowd of onlookers were loud in their praises of the god for granting me an oracle the very first time I approached him. They pronounced me blessed and thereafter lavished all kinds of attention on me: they said that only one person had ever been more warmly received by the god—a certain Lykourgos from Sparta.[61] They consented to my wish to make my home in the temple precinct and voted to pay me an allowance from the public purse. In short, my happiness was complete, for I spent my time either perform-

60. The Amphiktyonic Council, composed of representatives (*hieromnemones*) from member states, was responsible for administering the shrine at Delphi and the Pythian Games, which were held there every four years.

61. The semimythical Spartan lawgiver, said by some to have designed the unique Spartan social system according to instructions received from the Delphic oracle. His reception by the priestess is recounted by Herodotos (1.65).

ing holy ritual or taking part in sacrifices, which a host of people, both native and foreign, perform each and every day in great numbers and in many forms to win the god's favor; or else in discussions with philosophers, for that type of person congregates in great numbers around the temple of Pythian Apollo; the whole city is literally a palace of the Muses, permeated by the Apolline spirit of the god who leads them.

"To begin with, our inquiries ranged over a variety of topics: one would ask me how we worship our native gods in Egypt, while another might ask me to explain why different races venerate different animals and what myth is attached to each case; and a third might inquire about the construction of the pyramids, and a fourth about the underground maze.[62] In short, their questions covered everything there is in Egypt, for Greeks find all Egyptian lore and legend irresistibly attractive.

"And so the days passed, until one day one of the more sophisticated 28
ones started to question me about the Nile: What are its sources, what unique property does it have that makes it so different from other rivers, and how is it that, unlike all others, it floods in the summer? I told him everything I knew, all that is recorded about this river in sacred texts, things of which none but members of the priestly caste may read and learn. I explained that the river rises on the furthest boundaries of Ethiopia and Libya, where the East ends and the South begins. The reason that it floods in the summer is not, as some have thought, that its flow is impeded by the Etesian winds blowing against its current,[63] but that these selfsame winds blow around the time of the summer solstice and sweep all the clouds from the north southwards, until they converge on the torrid zone, where their forward impulse is checked by the immense heat of that region, and all the moisture that has hitherto gradually accumulated and condensed in them is turned into vapor, which is the source of violent rainstorms. The Nile swells: not content with being a river, it bursts its banks and turns Egypt into a sea, cultivating the fields as it goes. And thus the water of the Nile is sweeter to drink than that of any other river, since it is supplied by the rains of heaven, and also more pleasant to the touch, for it has lost most of the heat of the area where it rises but still retains some warmth redolent of its origins. This is also the reason why the Nile, alone of all rivers, does not give off breezes, which it certainly would do, I think, if, as I gather some eminent Greeks have suggested, its flood were caused by the melting of snow.

"While I was expounding these and similar ideas, the priest of Pythian 29
Apollo, with whom I had struck up a close acquaintance—Charikles was

62. The burial vaults of the pharaohs near Egyptian Thebes.

63. Etesian winds blow from the northwest in summer. The cause of these floods was a matter of perennial interest to classical writers.

his name—said to me: 'Excellent! That is exactly my own view. That is what I was told by the priests of the Nile at Katadoupoi.'[64]

"'You have been to Egypt then, Charikles?' I asked.

"'Yes indeed, Kalasiris, my wise friend.'

"'What took you there?' was my next question.

"'A domestic tragedy,' he replied, 'which has turned out to be a source of great happiness to me.'

"I expressed my surprise at this paradox.

"'You would not be so surprised,' said Charikles, 'if I told you how it has come about. And tell you I shall, whenever you wish.'

"'Then now is the time for you to tell your tale,' I said. 'I want to hear it straightaway.'

"Charikles sent the crowd away, and then he said: 'Listen then. Actually for some time I have wanted to tell you the story of my past, because I think you may be able to help me.

"'After my marriage we had no children, but I never ceased to pray to the god, and eventually, when I was well on in years, I was pronounced the father of a baby girl. But the god foretold that her birth would bring me no happiness. She reached the age to be wedded, and of the many who sought her hand I gave her in marriage to the one whom I adjudged the best. But on the very night that she first lay with her husband, my poor child's life ended. A fire broke out in her chamber—whether heaven-sent or deliberately started I cannot say—and before the wedding anthem was finished, it modulated into a funeral dirge; she was borne from her marriage bed to her place of eternal rest; the same torches that had shone so brightly at her nuptials served to light the pyre at her funeral. But malevolent Fate was planning a second act to my tragedy: the child's mother, broken by her death, was also taken from me.

"'Such divinely imposed suffering was more than I could endure, but I did not put an end to my life, for religious teachers had convinced me that such an act is sinful. Instead I stole away from the land of my birth, fled from the desolation that had once been my home: one's troubles are easier to forget if the eyes cannot remind the heart so sharply of them. Through many lands I wandered, until eventually I came to Egypt, your country, and visited Katadoupoi to find out about the cataracts of the Nile.

30 "'So now you know the reasons for my visit, my friend. But there is a sequel to this story—or to be more accurate, its climax—that I should like you to hear. As I was wandering around the town, whiling away my

64. Literally "down-crashers"; strictly speaking, this is the name of the first cataract of the Nile, modern Aswān. Heliodoros is the only classical writer to apply the name to a town, clearly mistakenly.

time and buying a few things that it is hard to find in Greece—for with the passage of time the pain of my grief had begun to lose its edge, and now I was hankering to return home—I was accosted by a man of imposing appearance, whose intelligence in particular was plain to see in his expression; he had not long come of the age of manhood, and his skin was as black as it could be. In faltering Greek he said he would like a word with me in private. I readily agreed, and he took me aside into a temple close by.

"'"I have been watching you buying a number of the herbs and roots that grow in India, Ethiopia, and Egypt," he said. "If you were interested in buying such things unadulterated and with no suspicion of sharp dealing, I would be pleased to supply them for you."

"'"I am interested," I said. "Show me your wares."

"'"I shall let you see them," he replied, "but give me your word that you will not haggle over the price."

"'"You must make sure then," I answered, "that the price you ask is not extortionate."

"'He drew out a little pouch that he carried beneath his arm and opened it to reveal a prodigious display of precious stones: pearls the size of small nuts, perfectly spherical and glistening the purest white; emeralds and sapphires, the former as green as grass in springtime, their depths glowing with a luster as clear and soft as olive oil, the latter exactly the color of the sea[65] in the shadow of a tall cliff, sparkling on the surface and a deep violet beneath. In short, all these gems, with their blend of many scintillating hues, were a sight to gladden the eye. But one glance was enough.

"'"My friend," I said, "it is time you started looking for another customer. All that I am and possess would hardly be enough to pay for just one of the stones you have shown me."

"'"But even if you are unable to buy them," he said, "you are perfectly capable of taking them as a gift."

"'"Of course I could afford them if they were given me," I answered. "But for some reason you are making fun of me."

"'"This is no joke," he replied. "I am very much in earnest. In the name of the god in whose temple we stand, I swear that I shall give you all these jewels, on condition that, in addition to what you see, you will agree to accept another gift much more precious than these."

"'At this I burst into laughter, and when he asked why, I replied, "Because it is absurd for you to promise to give me a gift of such great value and then to offer me payment for accepting it far in excess of the value of the gift itself!"

65. The text is corrupt at this point; the translation suggests the most probable sense.

"'"Trust me," he said. "But now you too must swear an oath, to put my gift to the best possible use and to follow my instructions to the letter."

"'I was thoroughly bewildered, but the thought of such riches led me to take his oath, exactly as he prescribed. That done, he took me to his house and showed me a little girl, lovely beyond telling, sublimely beautiful. He said she was seven years old, but to me she seemed nearly of an age to be married, such is the impression of increased stature given by surpassing beauty. I stood there bemused, not comprehending what had
31 happened, unable to take my eyes off the scene in front of me. He began to speak as follows.

"""The child you see before you, my friend, was, for a reason which you will learn shortly, exposed by her mother in her swaddling clothes, and her fate entrusted to the uncertainties of fortune. I chanced upon her and took her up, for once a soul had taken human form it would have been a sin for me to pass it by in its hour of peril—this is the sole precept of the naked sages of my country,[66] to whose teaching I had recently been admitted. Besides, even at so tender an age, there was something special, something godlike, about the light in the baby's eyes, so piercing yet so enchanting was the gaze she turned on me as I examined her. Beside her had been laid the necklace of gemstones that I showed you just now and a waistband of woven silk embroidered in native characters with a narrative of the child's circumstances. It was her mother, I imagine, who had had the foresight to provide the baby with these signs and tokens of recognition. When I read the embroidery and learned the truth of her origins and parentage, I took her to a country estate far away from the city and gave her to my shepherds to raise, warning them to speak of this to no one, under threat of punishment. The tokens that had been laid beside her I kept myself, from fear that they might be the cause of some mischief against the child.

"'"So for several years she passed unnoticed, but, as time went by, and she grew into the full blossom of youth, it became clear that her beauty was quite out of the ordinary. It would have been impossible to keep her loveliness hidden even by burying it in the ground: even then, I think, her radiance would have shone through! I was afraid that the child's secret would be revealed, resulting in death for her and consequences none too pleasant for me either. So I contrived to have myself sent as an ambassador to the satrap of Egypt, and I have brought her here with me, with the aim in mind of securing her future. Very soon I shall discuss with the satrap the business on which I have come; he has

66. These naked sages, or gymnosophists, were usually supposed to live in India; but Heliodoros is here following the lead of Philostratos, who in his biography of Apollonios of Tyana located some gymnosophists in Ethiopia.

promised me an audience this very day. I commit this child to your care and that of the gods who willed it thus. I do this on conditions that you are under oath to me to honor: she is freeborn—preserve her so and give her in marriage to a freeborn husband; and as her dowry give her this band that you now receive from me, or rather from the mother who laid it beside her when she exposed her child. I feel sure that you will honor our compact to the letter: I have your oath, and throughout your long stay here I have kept you under scrutiny and found your character to be that of a true Greek. For the moment I have been able to tell you this story only in an abbreviated form, for I have urgent business connected with my official mission. Meet me tomorrow by the temple of Isis, and I shall tell you about the child in more detail and at greater length."

" 'I did as he said; I took the child from him and, covering her face 32
with a veil, conveyed her to my lodgings, where for that day I tended her with much love, and in my heart I felt deep gratitude to the gods. From that day forward I thought of her, and spoke of her, as my own daughter.

"'The next morning at daybreak I set out in great haste for the temple of Isis, where I had arranged to meet the stranger, but after several hours of restless waiting there was still no sign of him, so I went to the satrap's palace and asked if anyone had seen the Ethiopian ambassador. There I was told that he had left, or rather had been expelled, for the satrap had threatened to have him put to death if he was not across the border by sunset. When I asked the reason, my informant said, "Because he told the satrap to keep his hands off the emerald mines,[67] claiming that they belong to Ethiopia."

" 'I trudged home with heavy heart, stunned and reeling from the heavy blow of not having been able to hear all about the girl—who she was, where she came from, who her mother and father were.' "

"It is not surprising," interrupted Knemon. "I am dismayed myself not to have heard. But perhaps I shall."

"Indeed you will," said Kalasiris, "but first I must tell you the rest of 33
Charikles' tale.

" 'When I reached my rooms,' he said, 'the child ran to meet me. Without uttering a word—for she did not yet know Greek—she clasped my hand in welcome. The mere sight of her was enough to dispel my gloom. I was impressed by the way that, just as puppies with a good pedigree will show affection to anyone after only a moment's acquaintance, she too had been so quick to sense the warmth of my feelings towards her and to behave towards me as a father.

67. These mines really existed, in the mountains near the border between Egypt and Ethiopia.

" 'I decided not to tarry at Katadoupoi, lest some supernatural malevolence should once again rob me of a daughter. I sailed down the Nile to the sea, where I found a ship and embarked for home. And now the child lives here with me: she is my daughter, she bears my name and is the mainstay of my life. In nearly every respect she is better than I could ever have hoped: she rapidly acquired Greek; like a vigorous young plant,[68] the bud of her childhood burst rapidly into the flower of youth; in physical beauty she is so superior to all other women that all eyes, Greek and foreign alike, turn towards her, and wherever she appears in the temples, colonnades, and squares, she is like a statue of ideal beauty that draws all eyes and hearts to itself. Yet, for all her qualities, she is, for me, the source of a pain that will not heal. You see, she has renounced marriage and is resolved to stay a virgin all her life; she has dedicated herself to the sacred service of Artemis and spends most of her time hunting and practicing archery. Life is a torment to me: I had hoped to marry her to my sister's son, a pleasant young man with nice manners and a civil tongue, but his hopes have been thwarted by her cruel decision. I have tried soft words, promises, and reasoned arguments to persuade her, but all to no avail. But the worst part is that I am, as the saying goes, hoist with my own petard: she makes great play with that subtlety in argument whose various forms I taught her as a basis for choosing the best way of life. Virginity is her god, and she has elevated it to the level of the immortals, pronouncing it without stain, without impurity, without corruption. But Eros and Aphrodite and all nuptial revelry she curses to damnation.

" 'This is the problem on which I am seeking your advice, and this is why I seized my opportunity and, when an opening somehow arose of its own accord, told you my tale at some length. Bear with me, Kalasiris, my dear friend. Use your magic and cast an Egyptian spell on her.[69] Induce her by word or deed to acknowledge her own nature. Make her realize that she is a woman now. It is something you could do with no difficulty if you set your mind to it, for she is not shy of men of learning—in fact she has passed most of her virgin life in their company—and she shares your dwelling—inside the temple precinct, I mean. I come to you as a suppliant. Do not reject my prayer; do not condemn me to live out my life without children, without comfort, without heirs, old and miserable. By the great god Apollo and by the native gods of Egypt I implore you.'

68. Alluding to and expanding the phrase used of Achilles by Thetis in the *Iliad* (18.437).

69. Egyptians were renowned as practitioners of magic, both black and white; also as crafty and duplicitous. These twin perceptions explain a great deal about the attitudes of Charikles and, later, Theagenes towards Kalasiris; and also his reaction in conforming to their stereotypes.

"He wept as he made his entreaty, and I wept to hear it, Knemon, and promised to give him whatever assistance I could.

"We were still pondering this problem when a man burst into the 34
room and announced that the leader of the Ainianes' sacred mission was at the door and had for some time been asking with some impatience for the priest to come out and commence the ceremony. I asked Charikles who the Ainianes were and what was this sacred mission and sacrifice they were performing.

"'In the whole of the province of Thessaly,' he replied, 'there are none of more noble ancestry than they. They are Hellenes in the truest sense of the word,[70] for they trace their descent from Hellen, the son of Deukalion.[71] They dwell all along the coast of the Gulf of Malis, but take particular pride in their capital, Hypata, whose name, according to them, is derived from the verb *hypateuein,* "to have rule over others," although the generally accepted view is that the town is so named simply because it is built at the foot of Mount Oite, *hyp' Oitei.* As for the sacrifice and sacred mission, the Ainianes send it to Neoptolemos, the son of Achilles, once every four years to coincide with the Pythian Games, which, as you know, are being held at the moment; for it was in Delphi that Neoptolemos was treacherously murdered by Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, at the very altar of Pythian Apollo.[72] This year the mission is especially splendid, as its leader prides himself on being a descendant of Achilles. I met the young man yesterday, and he struck me as a truly worthy member of the clan of the Sons of Achilles, so tall and handsome to behold that the mere sight of him is proof of his ancestry.'

"I confessed my astonishment that a man of the race of the Ainianes could proclaim himself a son of Achilles, for the works of the Egyptian poet Homer make it quite plain that Achilles came from Phthia.

"'The young man contends,' answered Charikles, 'that Achilles was an out-and-out Ainianian, for he maintains that Thetis rose from the Gulf of Malis to marry Peleus, and that the country along this coast has been called Phthia from time immemorial.[73] Other nations, he says, have invented fictitious claims on Achilles because of the high regard in which the hero is held. Furthermore, he also reckons himself among the descen-

70. *Hellenes* was the name which classical Greeks applied to the whole Greek nation, though originally, as in Homer, it was confined to a small tribe in southern Thessaly. Their eponymous ancestor, Hellen, seems to have been a later invention.

71. The Greek version of Noah, with his wife the sole survivor of a world flood.

72. There were many versions of the death of Neoptolemos; Heliodoros is here following that found in Euripides' *Andromache.*

73. In the *Iliad* Achilles is a native of Phthia. In classical times that name was given to the area around Pharsalos in Thessaly. The claim here is that in Homer the name refers to a different district, further south, which can thus claim Achilles as its own.

dants of Aiakos[74] by citing as an ancestor Menesthios, Spercheios's son by Polydora, the daughter of Peleus—the same Menesthios who was one of the foremost of Achilles' companions in the expedition against Troy and commanded the first brigade of the Myrmidones by virtue of his kinship with Achilles. There is one final piece of evidence that he offers in his efforts to substantiate a claim on Achilles and win him for the Ainianes, and that is the offering of propitiation sent to Neoptolemos; the peoples of Thessaly, he claims, unanimously renounced any claim on this in favor of the Ainianes, thus furnishing further proof of their closer ties of kinship.'

" 'I have no desire to challenge their claims,' I replied, 'be they true or be they simply wishful thinking. But please have the leader of their sacred mission shown in. I am all agog and aflutter to see what he is like.'

35 "Charikles nodded his assent, and in came the young man, who really did have something redolent of Achilles about him in his expression and dignity. He carried his head erect,[75] and had a mane of hair swept back from his forehead; his nose proclaimed his courage by the defiant flaring of his nostrils; his eyes were not quite slate blue but more black tinged with blue, with a gaze that was awesome and yet not unattractive, rather like the sea when its swelling billows subside, and a smooth calm begins to spread across its surface. After the customary exchange of courtesies, he said that the time had come to make sacrifice to Apollo so that the subsequent offering of propitiation to the hero and the procession in his honor could be performed punctually.

" 'Very well,' said Charikles, leaping to his feet. Then he turned to me and said, 'Today you will see Charikleia, if you have not already done so, for it is ancestral custom for the acolyte of Artemis to attend the procession and offering of atonement to Neoptolemos.'

"Actually, Knemon, I had seen his child many times before, for she had participated with me in sacrifices and had occasionally asked me questions about the scriptures. But I held my tongue and waited to see what would happen. Without more ado, we set off towards the temple, where the Thessalians had already made all the arrangements for the sacrifice. We had reached the altar, the priest had spoken the introductory prayer, the young man was on the point of commencing the ceremony, when from the inner shrine the voice of the priestess of the oracle rang forth.

74. Achilles' grandfather. The genealogy of Menesthios derives from *Iliad* 16.173ff., where he is introduced as commander of the first brigade of Myrmidones that accompany Patroklos to battle.

75. This and several other details in the description that follows bear a remarkably close resemblance to a description of Achilles by Philostratos (*Heroikos* 19.5): both probably reflect a well-known work of art.

One who starts in grace and ends in glory, another goddess-born:[76]
Of these I bid you have regard, O Delphi!
Leaving my temple here and cleaving Ocean's swelling tides,
To the black land of the Sun will they travel,
Where they will reap the reward of those whose lives are passed in virtue:
A crown of white on brows of black.

"So spake the god, but the bystanders were completely nonplussed 36
and quite at a loss to explain the meaning of the oracle. They each tried to extract a different interpretation from it; each understood it in a sense that matched his own wishes. As yet not one of them had discovered its real meaning, for by and large the interpretation of dreams and oracles depends on the outcome. In any case, the people of Delphi were in too much of a hurry, for they were highly excited at the prospect of this pageant for which such magnificent preparations had been made: no one took the time to investigate exactly what the oracle signified.

Book Three

"When the procession and the rest of the ceremony of propitiation had 1
come to an end—"

"Excuse me, Father," interrupted Knemon, "but they have not come to an end at all. You have not yet described them so that I can see them for myself. Your story has me in its power, body and soul, and I cannot wait to have the pageant pass before my very eyes. Yet you hurry past without a second thought. I feel like the proverbial guest who has turned up too late for the feast! You have rung up the curtain and brought it down again all in one phrase!"

"The last thing I want to do, Knemon," replied Kalasiris, "is to bore you with such irrelevancies, so I was confining myself to the central theme of my tale and the answers to your original questions. But your interest in incidental spectacle only confirms my impression that you are a true Athenian! So I shall give you a brief description of this pageant, one of the most remarkable there has ever been, both in itself and in its sequel.

"At the head of the procession came the sacrificial animals, led on the halter by the men who were to perform the holy rites, countryfolk in

76. This line plays untranslatably on the names of the hero and heroine. Charikleia's name is formed from *charis,* "grace," and *kleos,* "glory"; while Theagenes' consists of *thea,* "goddess," and the suffix *-genes,* meaning "born from."

country costume. Each wore a white tunic, caught up to knee length by a belt. Their right arms were bare to the shoulder and breast, and in their right hands they each brandished a double-headed axe. Each and every one of the oxen was black: they carried their heads proudly on powerful necks that thickened to a hump of perfect proportions; their horns were flawlessly straight and pointed, on some gilded, on others wreathed with garlands of flowers; their legs were stocky, their dewlaps so deep that they brushed their knees. There were exactly one hundred of them—a hecatomb in the true sense of the word. Behind the oxen came a host of different sorts of beasts for the sacrifice, each kind separate and in its due place, while flute and pipe began a solemn melody as prelude to the sacred ceremony.

2 "After the animals and the cowherds came some Thessalian maidens, in beauteous raiment girdled deep,[77] their hair streaming free. They were divided into two companies: half—the first company—carried baskets full of flowers and fresh fruit, while the others bore wickerwork trays of sweetmeats and aromatics that breathed a sweet fragrance over the whole place. They balanced their baskets on their heads, leaving their hands free to link arms in a formation of diagonal rows; thus they were able to dance and process simultaneously. They were given the signal to begin by the second group launching into the introduction to the ode, for this group had been granted the privilege of singing the hymn through from beginning to end. The hymn was in praise of Thetis and Peleus, and their son and finally their son's son. After them, Knemon—"

"What do you mean 'Knemon'?" interrupted Knemon. "For a second time, Father, you are trying to cheat me of the best part of the story by not giving me all the details of the hymn. It is as if you had only provided me with a view of the procession, without my being able to hear anything."

"Listen then," replied Kalasiris, "if that is what you want. The hymn went something like this.

> Of Thetis I sing, the golden-haired goddess,
> Daughter of Nereus, the Lord of the Ocean,
> Married to Peleus at mighty Zeus's wishing,[78]
> The star of the sea waves, our own Aphrodite.
> The child of her womb was the noble Achilles,
> Who fought like the War God and raged in the battle,
> Whose spear flashed like lightning, whose fame lives forever.

77. Homeric; see *Iliad* 9.594; *Odyssey* 3.154, etc.

78. In some versions of the myth Zeus would have had Thetis for himself but for a prophecy that she would bear a son stronger than his father. Fearing loss of his throne, Zeus married her to a mortal man, Peleus, who thus became a byword for felicity.

Neoptolemos, the son Pyrrha bore him,[79]
Death-dealer to Trojans but Greece's salvation,
Neoptolemos, we pray you, be gracious;
Showered with blessings in your tomb here in Delphi,
Smile and accept the offering we bring you.
From all tribulation deliver our city.
Of Thetis I sing, the golden-haired goddess.

"To the best of my recollection, then, Knemon, the hymn was along these lines. So exquisite were the harmonies of the singers, so exactly did the rhythms of the sound of their steps keep time with the music, that one's ears charmed one's eyes to be blind to what they saw; and as the procession of maidens passed, the onlookers moved in step with them, as if drawn by the cadences of the song, until behind them the troop of young horsemen and their captain rode up in splendor to prove the vision of beauty more potent than any sound. 3

"The young men numbered fifty, divided into two groups of twenty-five to escort the leader of the sacred mission who rode at their center. They wore boots woven from straps of crimson leather and bound tightly above their ankles. Their cloaks were white, fastened across their chests with a golden clasp and hemmed all around with a band of dark blue. Their mounts were all Thessalian steeds,[80] and the light of the freedom of the plains of Thessaly shone in their eyes; they resented the mastery of the bit, foaming and champing and trying to dislodge it, yet they allowed their riders' thoughts to guide them. The horses were caparisoned with silver and gold frontlets and cheekpieces so splendid that you might have thought that the young men had held a competition on this point.

"But splendid though they were, Knemon, the crowd hardly spared them a second glance. Every eye was turned towards their captain—my beloved Theagenes; it was as if a flash of lightning had cast all they had seen before into darkness, so radiant he was in our eyes. He too was on horseback, in full armor and brandishing a spear of ash wood tipped with bronze.[81] He wore no helmet but led the procession bareheaded, cloaked in a flowing crimson mantle with gold embroidery depicting the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs[82] and a clasp with, at its center, an amber figure of

79. Neoptolemos is normally described as the son of Deidameia. Pyrrha seems to have been introduced here to allude to and explain the hero's other name, Pyrrhos.

80. Thessaly, virtually the only flat area of any size in Greece, was famous for its fine horses and the horsemanship of its inhabitants.

81. Recalling the famous ash-wood spear of Achilles in the *Iliad*.

82. This battle took place when the Centaurs became drunk at the wedding of the Lapith king Peirithoos at Larisa. This is thus an appropriately Thessalian legend.

Athene with her Gorgon's head talisman on her breastplate. A sweetly blowing breeze added to the charm of the scene, for its gentle breath tenderly caressed the hair that cascaded over his neck and parted the curls on his forehead, and also swept the hem of his mantle over his horse's back and shanks. The very horse seemed to understand what a fine thing it was to carry such a fine rider on his back, so proudly he flexed his neck and carried his head high with ears aprick; there was arrogance in the way his brows arched over his eyes, and pride in his step as he pranced along with his master on his back; he obeyed the rein's every command, and with each pace he paused for an instant in perfect balance with one leg uplifted, gently clipping the ground with the tip of his hoof so as to give a smooth and gentle rhythm to his gait. The sight took everyone's breath away, and they all awarded the young man the prize for manhood and beauty. And all those women of the lower orders who were incapable of controlling and concealing their emotions pelted him with apples and flowers in the hope of attracting his goodwill.[83] The verdict was unanimous: nothing in the world could surpass the beauty of Theagenes.

4 "But when rosy-fingered Dawn, the child of morning, appeared (as Homer would say),[84] when from the temple of Artemis rode forth my wise and beautiful Charikleia, then we realized that even Theagenes could be eclipsed, but eclipsed only in such measure as perfect female beauty is lovelier than the fairest of men. She rode in a carriage drawn by a pair of white bullocks, and she was appareled in a long purple gown embroidered with golden rays. Around her breast she wore a band of gold; the man who had crafted it had locked all his art into it—never before had he produced such a masterpiece, and never would he be able to repeat the achievement.[85] It was in the shape of two serpents whose tails he had intertwined at the back of the garment; then he had brought their necks round under her breasts and woven them into an intricate knot, finally allowing their heads to slither free of the knot and draping them down either side of her body as if they formed no part of the clasp. You would have said not that the serpents seemed to be moving but that they were actually in motion. There was no cruelty or fellness in their eyes to cause one fright, but they were steeped in a sensuous languor as if lulled by the sweet joys that dwelt in Charikleia's bosom. They were made of gold but were dark in color, for their maker's craft had blackened the gold so the mixture of yellow and black should express the roughness and shifting hues of their scales. Such was the band round the maiden's

83. The apple was a symbol of Aphrodite, and thus of sexual desire.

84. This is a formulaic line that occurs twice in the *Iliad* and twenty times in the *Odyssey*.

85. This passage echoes *Odyssey* 11.613–14, where Odysseus describes the baldric worn by the ghost of Herakles.

breast. Her hair was neither tightly plaited nor yet altogether loose: where it hung long down her neck, it cascaded over her back and shoulders, but on her crown and temples, where it grew in rosebud curls golden as the sun, it was wreathed with soft shoots of bay that held it in place and prevented any unseemly blowing in the breeze. In her left hand she carried a bow of gold, the quiver was slung over her right shoulder, and in her right hand she held a lighted torch. But as she was that day the light in her eyes shone brighter than any torch."

"It's them!" exclaimed Knemon. "It's Charikleia and Theagenes!"

"Where are they? In the gods' name, show me!" implored Kalasiris, supposing that Knemon could actually see them.

"They are not here, Father," replied Knemon, "but your description portrayed them so vividly, so exactly as I know them from my own experience, that they seemed to be before my eyes."

"I doubt," said Kalasiris, "that you have seen them as Greece and the sun gazed upon them that day, universally admired, universally acclaimed. Men lost their hearts to Charikleia, and women theirs to Theagenes. To know the love of one of them, people thought, must be very heaven, although the people of Delphi were rather more lost in admiration of the young man, and the Thessalians of the maiden, each being more struck by what they were seeing for the first time; for an unfamiliar sight is generally more impressive than one well known to us.

"Such a sweet deception, such a pleasant mistake, Knemon! My heart was all aflutter when I thought you could see my beloved children and were telling me they were here. But I think you have been deceiving me all along, because at the beginning of my story you gave me your word that they were on their way and would appear any second—and, what is more, you demanded payment in the form of their history. Now it is evening, the sun has set, and still you cannot produce them!"

"Have no fear," answered Knemon. "They will come; you can be assured of that. As it is, something may have happened to detain them, so that they will arrive later than we had arranged. Anyway, even if they were here, I should not tell you, for I have not yet been paid in full! So, if you really do long to see them, keep your side of the bargain and tell me how the story ends."

"I am loath," said Kalasiris, "to broach a subject so full of painful memories for me, especially as I thought I must be wearying you beyond the point of surfeit with my prattling. But I can see that you enjoy listening and have an insatiable appetite for good stories, so, come, let us pick up the narrative where I left it. But first let us light a lamp and pour the last libation of the day to the gods of night. Then, when the traditional respects have been paid, we shall be able to pass the night in storytelling without fear."

5 With these words the old man motioned to a serving girl, who brought in a lighted lamp. Then he began his libation, invoking all the gods, but Hermes in particular,[86] and prayed for a night free from unpleasant dreams and entreated that his loved ones should appear to him, if only in sleep.

This done, he went on. "So now, Knemon, when the procession had wound three times around the tomb of Neoptolemos, and the young men had ridden three times around it, the women cried aloud and the men raised a loud cry; whereupon, as if at one preconcerted signal, cattle, sheep, and goats began to be sacrificed, almost as if they were all being slaughtered by a single hand. On an enormous altar they heaped countless twigs, and on top they laid all the choicest parts of the sacrifices, as custom demanded. Then they asked the priest of Pythian Apollo to commence the libation and light the altar fire. Charikles replied that it was his office to pour the libation, 'But the leader of the sacred mission should be the one to light the fire, with the torch that he has received from the hands of the acolyte. This is the usage laid down by ancestral custom.'

"With these words he began the libation, and Theagenes made to take the fire; and in that instant it was revealed to us, Knemon, that the soul is something divine and partakes in the nature of heaven. For at the moment when they set eyes on one another, the young pair fell in love, as if the soul recognized its kin at the very first encounter and sped to meet that which was worthily its own. For a brief second full of emotion they stood motionless; then slowly, so slowly, she handed him the torch and he took it from her, and all the while they gazed hard into one another's eyes, as if calling to mind a previous acquaintance or meeting.[87] Then they smiled a fleeting, furtive smile, discernible only as a slight softening of their expressions. And then they blushed, as if they were embarrassed at what had occurred, and a moment later—I suppose as their passion touched their hearts—the color drained from their faces. In short, in the space of an instant, an infinity of expression passed across both their faces, as every imaginable alteration in complexion and countenance bore witness to the waves that pounded their souls.

"No one but me seemed to see any of this; they were all taken up with their own concerns and thinking their own thoughts. Even Charikles failed to notice, as he was pronouncing the traditional prayer and invocation. But I was concerned solely to watch the young couple, for at the moment, Knemon, when the oracle sang through the temple as Theage-

86. This recalls the bedtime libation of the Phaiakians in the *Odyssey* (7.137f.). Hermes, as guide of the souls of the dead, was also responsible for preventing their haunting the living in the shape of dreams.

87. This equation of falling in love with memory derives from Plato's discussion of love in the *Phaidros*. The whole scene is rich in echoes of Plato.

nes made his offering, I had recognized the allusion to their names and so formed some notion of what lay ahead. But as yet I had no clear idea as to what the rest of the oracle meant.

"Eventually, and with what appeared a great effort of will, Theagenes 6
wrenched himself away from the maiden, and used the torch to light the altar fire. The ceremony was at an end: the Thessalians went off to celebrate, while the rest of the assembly dispersed, each to his own home. Charikleia threw a white shawl around her shoulders and set off, with her usual few companions, towards her lodgings in the temple precinct. She did not live with her so-called father, as considerations of ritual purity demanded that she live in absolute seclusion.

"My curiosity had been whetted by what I had seen and heard, and I was pleased when I ran into Charikles, who asked, 'Did you see her, my pride and joy, and Delphi's too, Charikleia?'

"'Yes, indeed,' I replied, 'although this was not the first time. I have seen her on many occasions before today, when we have met in the temple; we have a more than passing acquaintance, as they say, for we have frequently joined in offering sacrifice, and I have answered the problems that she has put to me on matters human and divine.'

"'What did you think of her today then, Kalasiris my friend? Did she not add a certain luster to the ceremony?'

"'Mind your words, Charikles,' I said. 'That is like asking whether the moon shines more brightly than the other stars!'

"'There were those, though,' he said, 'who sang the praises of that young man from Thessaly.'

"'They were only awarding second and third prizes,' I replied. 'Everyone admitted that the crowning glory, the real jewel of the pageant, was your daughter.'

"Charikles was delighted, and I too was making real progress with my objective of winning his absolute confidence in me. He smiled.

"'I am on my way to her at the moment,' he said. 'If you do not mind, let us both show our concern and go together to make sure that she has come to no harm from that horrid crowd of common people.'

"I gladly accepted his invitation and assured him that I deemed his affairs of more pressing importance than any other business I might have. But when we reached Charikleia's residence, we entered and found her 7
tossing restlessly on her bed, her eyes moist with love. She embraced her father as normal, but when he asked her what was wrong, she said she was suffering from a headache and would be grateful if she might be left in peace. Charikles was much alarmed; instructing her serving girls that she was not to be disturbed, he tiptoed out of her room; I followed.

"Once outside the house, he said, 'What is the matter with her, Kalasiris? What malady is this that my daughter has contracted?'

"'You must not be surprised,' I replied, 'if, by taking part in a procession before such a huge crowd of people, she has attracted the attention of an evil eye.'

"'So,' said Charikles, with a mocking laugh, 'you share the vulgar belief that there is such a thing as the power of the evil eye?'

"'Of course,' I replied. 'It is as real as it could be. Let me explain.[88] We are completely enveloped in air, which permeates our bodies by way of our eyes, nose, respiratory tract, and other channels, bringing with it, as it enters, various properties from outside, thus engendering in those who take it in an effect corresponding to the properties it introduces. Thus, when a man looks maliciously upon beauty, he imbues the air around him with the quality of malevolence, and disperses his own breath, charged as it is with spite, towards his neighbor. Being composed of such fine particles, it penetrates to his bones, to his very marrow. So in many cases disease is caused by malice, and this effect is quite properly spoken of as the power of an evil eye.

"'Here is another instance, Charikles. Many people contract ophthalmia or some infectious disease without having touched the patient at all or shared a bed or table with him, merely by breathing the same air. Conclusive proof of my point is furnished by the genesis of love, which originates from visually perceived objects, which, if you will excuse the metaphor, shoot arrows of passion, swifter than the wind, into the soul by way of the eyes. This is perfectly logical, because, of all our channels of perception, sight is the least static and contains the most heat, and so is more receptive of such emanations; for the spirit which animates it is akin to fire, and so it is well suited to absorb the transient and unstable impressions of love.

8 "'If you want another example, let me furnish you with an instance from the world of nature, one recorded in the sacred texts on animals.[89] There is a species of plover[90] that can cure jaundice: a person suffering from that disease has only to look the bird in the eye to be cured. However, the bird keeps its eyes firmly shut, turns tail, and runs away, not because, as some have suggested, it begrudges its healing powers, but because it has a natural tendency to attract and divert the current of the disease towards itself, simply by looking upon it. So the sight of jaundice is like a physical injury, and the bird avoids it. You may also have heard of a serpent called the basilisk, whose mere breath and regard are

88. The explanation that follows and the examples cited correspond closely, sometimes word for word, to a passage in Plutarch's *Table Talk* (680Cff.). Either Heliodoros has taken this material from Plutarch or, more probably, they share a source.

89. Despite this claim to privileged information, what follows is common knowledge, and Heliodoros is still using the same source.

90. The text specifies the *charadrios;* perhaps the Norfolk or thick-knee plover, *Charadrius oedicnemus.*

sufficient to wither and cause serious damage to anything that crosses its path.

"'So if some people have a malignant effect even on their nearest and dearest, we should not be surprised: they are congenitally malevolent, and the effect they have is the result not of volition but of an innate characteristic.'

"Charikles paused a moment before replying: 'Your solution to the 9
problem is brilliant and completely convincing. I only hope that one day Charikleia will get a glimpse of love's craving; in that case my diagnosis would not be one of sickness but of restored good health. You know that it was to achieve precisely that that I enlisted your aid. As things are, there is no chance of anything of that kind having befallen her, for she abhors sex and detests love. It really is the evil eye that has made her unwell, it seems, but I am sure you will agree to break the spell, for you are a good friend and nothing is beyond your powers.'

"I promised to give her such assistance as I was able, if I found her to be the victim of any affliction. This discussion was still in progress when 10
we were accosted by a fellow in a great hurry who said: 'Gentlemen, the way you are dawdling anyone would think you had received an order to go into battle rather than an invitation to a banquet thrown by Theagenes, the finest of men, under the patronage of Neoptolemos, the greatest of heroes. Come along! Do not keep the party waiting all day! All the guests are there but you.'

"Charikles leaned towards me and whispered in my ear: 'This is a man who believes in carrying a big stick when he issues his invitations! Not the right spirit at all—although he is obviously no stranger to spirits! But we had better go, or else he might resort to violence.'

"'You are joking, of course,' I replied. 'But, yes, let us go.'

"When we arrived at the party, Theagenes gave Charikles the place on the couch next to himself and treated me with respect too, for Charikles' sake. There is no point in boring you with all the details of the celebration—the dances of the maidens, the flute girls, the war dance that the young men performed in full armor,[91] everything else that Theagenes had arranged to complement the magnificence of the banquet in his determination to make the party convivial and memorably merry.

"But there is something that it is of the utmost importance for you to hear and that gives me especial pleasure to relate, which is this: Theagenes kept up the pretense of being in high spirits and forced himself to be hospitable to his guests, but he could not disguise the true tendency of his thoughts from me. At one moment he would stare into space and the

91. This war dance is named as the *pyrriche,* sometimes said to have been invented by and named after Neoptolemos/Pyrrhos, and thus particularly appropriate entertainment for a feast held in the hero's honor.

next heave a deep sigh for no apparent reason; he would be gloomy, seemingly lost in thought, and then the next minute he would seem to become conscious of his state, recall his thoughts, and affect a more cheerful expression; it seemed to take very little to produce these changes of mood, which covered the whole spectrum of emotions. The mind of a person in love is rather like that of a drunkard: volatile and completely unstable, since in both cases the soul is riding on a tide of emotional fluidity, which is why lovers are prone to heavy drinking, and drunkards to falling in love.

11 "But eventually the listless melancholy that filled his heart could be concealed no longer, and then it became obvious to the rest of the company that he was unwell. Even Charikles noticed his malaise and whispered to me, 'The evil eye must have lighted on this fellow as well. I think the same has happened to him as to Charikleia.'

"'It is the same, by Isis!' I replied. 'Though that was only to be expected, considering that he, like her, played a prominent part in the pageant.'

"While we were talking, the time came for the wine cups to be passed around the table. Theagenes drank a toast of friendship to each guest, though with rather bad grace, but when it came to my turn, I thanked him for his kind wishes but declined to take the cup.[92] He glared at me angrily, supposing that my refusal of the cup was meant as a slight, but Charikles realized what was happening and said, 'He does not drink wine nor eat any creature that is endowed with a soul.'

"Theagenes asked the reason for this, and Charikles explained, 'He comes from Memphis, in Egypt, where he is a high priest of Isis.'

"On hearing the words 'Egypt' and 'high priest,' Theagenes suddenly flushed with joy, like a man who has stumbled on hidden treasure. He leapt to his feet and called for water, which he drank, saying: 'Wisest of men, please accept this cup of fellowship in which I have drunk your health with your favorite drink. May this shared table be a pledge of our friendship.'

"'So be it,' I answered, 'though, my dear Theagenes, my friendly feelings towards you are of long standing.' Then I took the cup and drank.

"With this the party came to an end, and we each departed to our own homes. Theagenes bade me good night with a long embrace whose warmth belied the brevity of our acquaintance. After returning to my lodgings, I lay awake in bed for the first part of the night, examining every facet of the question of the young couple, hunting for the meaning of the last lines of the oracle. Then, in the small hours, Apollo and Artemis appeared to me, so I imagined—if indeed I did imagine it and not see

92. The toast comprised both parties drinking to one another from the same cup.

them for real. Apollo entrusted Theagenes to my care; Artemis, Charikleia. They called me by name and said: 'It is time now for you to return to the land of your birth, for thus the ordinance of destiny demands. Go then and take these whom we deliver to you; make them the companions of your journey; consider them as your own children. From Egypt conduct them onward wherever and however it please the gods.'

"With these words they departed, and in so doing they demonstrated 12
that my vision had been real and no mere dream. I understood most of what I had seen but was at a loss to know to what race of men or what land it might please the gods for the young couple to be conducted onward."

At this point Knemon interrupted. "I am sure you learned the answer afterward, father, and will tell me in due course. But you said that the gods demonstrated to you that they had not come in a dream but had manifested themselves in physical form. How?"

"In the way that Homer, the wise poet, alludes to, although the ignorant majority miss the allusion. Somewhere he says

> for I knew
> easily as he went away the form of his feet, the legs' form
> from behind him. Gods, though gods, are conspicuous.[93]

"I seem to be one of the ignorant majority then, and perhaps, Kalasiris, your purpose in referring to those verses was to prove that! I know that I was taught the superficial purport of the lines when the text was first expounded to me, but I am totally unaware of the religious teaching embedded in them."[94]

Kalasiris paused for a moment until he had achieved the exalted state 13
of mind appropriate to the contemplation of holy mysteries. Then he said: "Knemon, when gods and spirits descend to earth or ascend from earth, they very occasionally assume the form of an animal, but generally they take on human shape: the resemblace to ourselves makes their theophany more accessible to us. They might pass unperceived by the uninitiated, but they cannot avoid recognition by the wise, who will know them firstly by their eyes, which have an extraordinary intensity and never blink, but more especially by their method of locomotion, which is not accomplished by the displacement or transposition of their feet, but by a sort of smooth, gliding motion and without touching the ground, so that they cleave rather than walk through the circumambient air. This is why the Egyptians make their statues of the gods with the two feet connected and carved virtually as one form. Homer was well

93. *Iliad* 13.71–72.

94. It was not uncommon in late antiquity for allegorical meanings to be extracted from literary texts, particularly the Homeric poems.

aware of this too, for he was an Egyptian and well versed in our holy lore. So he included enigmatic references to these phenomena in his epics, leaving their discovery to those who were capable of interpreting them. Thus of Athene he says, 'Her eyes were terribly shining,'[95] and of Poseidon,

> I knew
> easily[96] as he went away the form of his feet, the legs' form
> from behind him,

as if he were gliding along: that is the meaning of 'easily as he went away,' although some misconstrue the sentence and interpret 'I knew easily.'"

14 "You have initiated me into one mystery, reverend sir," said Knemon, "but several times you have referred to Homer as an Egyptian, a suggestion which, it may well be, no one in the whole world has heard made before today. I have no doubt that what you say is true, but I am most surprised, and should be very grateful if you could spare a few minutes to explain this point fully."

"This is not the moment, Knemon," he replied, "to discuss the question in depth, but nevertheless let me give you a brief answer.

"Different nations may make different claims about Homer's origins, my friend;[97] and it may be true that the wise man is a native of every city. But the fact of the matter is that Homer was a compatriot of mine, an Egyptian, and his hometown was Thebes, 'Thebes of the hundred gates,' to borrow his own phrase.[98] Ostensibly he was the son of a high priest, but in actual fact his father was Hermes, whose high priest his ostensible father was: for once when his wife was sleeping in the temple in the performance of some traditional rite, the god coupled with her and sired Homer, who bore on his person a token of this union of human and divine, for, from the moment of his birth, one of his thighs was covered with a shaggy growth of hair. Hence, as he begged his way around the world, particularly through Greece, performing his poetry, he was given the name *ho meros,* 'the thigh.' He himself never spoke his true name, never mentioned his city or his origins, but the name Homer was coined by those who knew of his physical deformity."[99]

"What was his purpose in concealing the land of his birth, Father?"

95. *Iliad* 1.200.

96. Kalasiris's interpretation involves taking the adverb "easily" (*rheia*) with the verb "went" rather than with "knew," and connecting it with the verb *rhein,* "to flow" or "to glide." Such a reading is just about possible, as in the English, but highly unnatural; the etymological point is impossible to reproduce.

97. The truth of Homer's identity was lost in the mists of time, and various Greek states competed to prove themselves Homer's birthplace. Despite Knemon's surprise, the theory that Homer was actually an Egyptian was not a particularly novel one.

98. *Iliad* 9.383.

99. Many etymologies were offered for Homer's name; this is among the most fanciful.

"It may be that he felt the disgrace of being an exile particularly keenly, for he was banished by his father after the mark he bore on his body had led to the realization of his illegitimacy at the time when he came of age and was being enrolled as an ordinand. Or possibly this may be another example of his wisdom, and by concealing his true place of origin he was claiming the whole world as his own."

"I find what you have to say completely convincing, bearing in mind 15
not only the typically Egyptian combination of concealed meanings and sheer enjoyment in his poetry but also his extraordinary genius, which would not have so far excelled everyone else, had there not been a literally divine and superhuman element in his begetting. But now, Kalasiris, having detected the gods by the Homeric method, tell me what happened next."

"Much the same as what had gone before, Knemon: renewed sleeplessness, deliberation, and the apprehensions that go hand in hand with darkness. I was happy, because I hoped that I had found something that I had not expected to find, and could now look forward to returning home; but I was saddened to think that Charikles would have his daughter taken from him; I was perplexed when I tried to work out how to bring the young pair together and arrange our departure; I was tormented with worries about how we could make our escape undetected, what direction we should take, whether we should go by land or sea. In short, I was tossed on a sea of anxiety and passed the rest of the night in sleepless anguish.

"At the very crack of dawn there was a knocking at the inner door, 16
and I heard someone calling for the slave boy. When the servant asked who it was hammering at the door and what his business was, the caller replied, 'Tell your master that Theagenes the Thessalian is here!'

"I was delighted by the news that the young man was at the door and told them to show him in. It seemed to me that my plans were already afoot without my having lifted a finger, for I inferred that, having heard at the party that I was from Egypt and a high priest, he had come to enlist my help with his love, laboring, I suppose, under the common misapprehension that the wisdom of Egypt is all of one and the same kind. On the contrary: there is one kind that is of low rank and, you might say, crawls upon the earth; it waits upon ghosts and skulks around dead bodies; it is addicted to magic herbs, and spells are its stock-in-trade; no good ever comes of it; no benefit ever accrues to its practitioners; generally it brings about its own downfall, and its occasional successes are paltry and mean-spirited—the unreal made to appear real, hopes brought to nothing; it devises wickedness and panders to corrupt pleasures. But there is another kind, my son, true wisdom, of which the first sort is but a counterfeit that has stolen its title; true wisdom it is that we priests and members of the sacerdotal caste practice from childhood; its eyes are

raised towards heaven; it keeps company with the gods and partakes of the nature of the Great Ones; it studies the movement of the stars and thus gains knowledge of the future; it has no truck with the wicked, earthly concerns of the other kind, but all its energies are directed to what is good and beneficial to mankind. And this wisdom was the cause of my timely departure from the land of my birth, for, as I explained to you before, I hoped to avert the ills it foretold and to prevent the battle my sons were to fight with one another. But let us lay all this in the lap of the gods, especially the Fates, who have the power to bring things to pass or not. Now it seems that they sentenced me to exile from the land of my birth not so much for this reason as that I should find Charikleia. How this came about the next stage of my story will tell.

17 "Theagenes entered, and, having exchanged courtesies, I made him sit next to me on the bed.

"'What brings you here so early in the morning?' I asked.

"He sat there for a while running his hand over his face before replying, 'I am in terrible trouble, but I am too ashamed to tell you what it is.' These were the only words he could speak.

"The situation, I decided, called for a spot of showmanship; I would divine what I knew already! So, gazing at him with a benign expression, I said, 'You may hesitate to confess, but all things are known to my wisdom and the gods.'

"Then I paused a moment, performed some meaningless calculations on my fingers, tossed my hair around, and pretended that the spirit was upon me.

"'You are in love, my son!' I pronounced.

"At this oracular utterance he started, but when I added, 'with Charikleia,' he thought that the voice of god really was speaking through me, and would have prostrated himself at my feet, had I not restrained him. He moved closer and showered my head with kisses. He gave thanks to the gods; his hopes, he said, had not been disappointed. He begged me to save him: he needed my help, he said, and needed it now, otherwise he would die, so terrible was the evil that had struck him, so fiercely burned the flames of passion in a heart that had never felt love before now. He claimed that he had never been intimate with a woman and swore many oaths to that effect; he had never felt anything but contempt for their whole sex, he said, and even for married love, if it was ever mentioned to him; but now Charikleia's beauty had exposed the falseness of his pretensions: it was not that he was naturally proof against temptation, simply that until yesterday he had never set eyes on a woman worthy of his love. He wept as he spoke, as if to make it clear that it was only under compulsion that he admitted defeat at the hands of a girl.

"I comforted him, saying: 'Now that you have come to seek my aid, all will be well. She will not be able to resist my power now. She may be pitiless, she may fight hard against love's dominion, she may sneer at the merest mention of Aphrodite and marriage, but on your behalf all resources must be mobilized. Art can bend even nature to its will. Just take heart, and when I tell you what you must do, be sure to do it.'

"He promised to carry out whatever orders I might give him, even if I were to command him to walk over swords. He was still making his ap- 18
peals and promising to give me all he had in payment for my services when a messenger arrived from Charikles.

"'Charikles asks you to join him,' he said. 'He is in the temple of Apollo, not far from here, offering up a hymn to the god, for he has had a dream that has rather alarmed him.'

"I rose to my feet at once and said good-bye to Theagenes. When I reached the temple, I found Charikles sitting on a seat, slumped in melancholy and sighing continuously. I stood beside him and asked, 'Why so glum and pensive?'

"'How else do you expect me to be?' he replied. 'I have had a most alarming dream, and, I am told, my daughter's condition has deteriorated—she has not slept a wink all night. Her ill health is causing me great distress, especially because tomorrow is the day when the games are due to be held, a day when tradition demands that the holy acolyte should display the torch to the view of the competitors in the race in armor and decide the winner. We have a choice of evils: either she must miss the race, which would be an affront to tradition, or else she must attend it despite herself, which would aggravate her sickness.

"'So, if you have not already done so, help us now and effect a cure. That would be the proper thing to do for a friend like me, and would also be an act of piety towards the gods. As you said yourself, it is only a matter of curing the effect of the evil eye, something you could do easily if you put your mind to it: high priests are quite capable of putting even the greatest wrongs to right.'

"I concealed my true thoughts from him also by confessing that I had been remiss and asking him to allow me that day, for, I said, I had a certain preparation to see to in order to effect a cure.

"'But now,' I said, 'let us visit the girl in order to make a closer examination and set her mind at rest, so far as we are able. Also, Charikles, I should like you to speak to your daughter on my behalf and tell her that I am a close and trusted friend, so that she will be more at ease and respond in better heart to my physicking.'

"'Very well,' he said, 'let us be on our way.'

"When we reached Charikleia—but why mince words? She was com- 19
pletely enslaved by her passion; the bloom was leaving her cheeks, and it

was as if the fire in her eyes were being doused by the water of her tears. Nevertheless, she composed herself when she saw us and did her best to assume her normal countenance and way of speaking. Charikles embraced her and covered her with kisses beyond numbering; he displayed every possible sign of tenderness towards her.

"'My daughter, my child,' he said, 'are you trying to hide your suffering from me, your father? You have fallen under the evil eye, so why hold your tongue as if you are the one who are doing wrong rather than the one who have been wronged by the eyes that looked with malice upon you? Take heart: I have asked the wise Kalasiris here to find a cure for you. I am sure he will succeed, for he is more skilled than anyone else in the divine art. You see, he is a high priest who has dedicated the whole of his life to the service of the gods; and, more important, he has the warmest of feelings towards us. So, please, feel no inhibitions in making him welcome. He wishes to make an incantation and try some other remedies, so please cooperate with him. It is not as if you are unused to the company of scholars!'

"Charikleia said not a word, but she nodded, as if to say that she was glad to receive my assistance. With that we parted, but not before Charikles had urged me not to forget his earlier entreaties and to see if I could find a way to arouse in Charikleia some appetite for men and marriage. I promised him that it would not be long before his wish was fulfilled, and he took his leave of me in high spirits.

Book Four

1 "The following day was the last of the Pythian tournament, but for the young couple another tournament was still at its height, one presided over and refereed, it seems to me, by Love, who was determined to use these two contestants, in the only match he had arranged, to prove that his particular tournament is the greatest of all.

"What happened was this: the whole of Greece had gathered to watch the games, which were supervised by the Amphiktyones. The other events—footraces, wrestling bouts, boxing matches—had been completed in magnificent style when finally the herald proclaimed, 'Let the men in armor step forward!'

"At that moment, Charikleia, the holy acolyte, appeared in all her glory at the end of the racetrack. So she had come! Her disinclination had been outweighed by tradition, or rather, I think, by her hopes of catching a glimpse of Theagenes. In her left hand she held aloft a lighted torch, in her right at arm's length a branch of palm.[100] Her appearance

100. A symbol of victory; the prizes in the Pythian Games usually consisted of wreaths of laurel.

caused every eye in the crowd to turn towards her, but perhaps no eye was quicker than that of Theagenes. A lover is so swift to espy the object of his desires! He must have been told what was to happen, for he was so keyed up to the moment of her appearance that he was quite unable to sit there in silence. He turned to me—he had deliberately sat next to me—and whispered: 'That is her! That is Charikleia!' I told him to calm down.

"In response to the herald's summons, a man in light armor stepped 2
forward. He clearly had a high opinion of himself and considered himself the star of the show. He had won many victories in the past, but on this occasion there was no one to oppose him; I suppose no one felt he had a chance of beating him. The Amphiktyones were on the point of dismissing him, as the rules did not allow the crown of victory to be awarded to anyone who had not taken part in a contest, but he asked that the herald should invite all comers to race against him. The umpires gave the word, and the herald proclaimed that anyone who would contest the race should come forward.

"'It is me that he is calling!' Theagenes said to me.

"'What do you mean?' I said.

"'You will see, Father,' he replied. 'While I am here watching, no one else shall carry off the prize of victory from Charikleia's hands.'

"'But what if you fail?' I said. 'Do you not care about the humiliation you will incur?'

"'I shall not fail,' he replied. 'Who is so insanely eager to see and be near Charikleia that he could outrun me? Is there anyone else to whom the mere sight of her can give wings and draw him to her without his feet touching the ground? Do you not know that painters give Love wings to symbolize the mercurial state of his victims? Besides, if you will allow me to boast a little, to this day no one has ever had the satisfaction of beating me in a footrace.'[101]

"With these words, he leapt to his feet and strode out into the center 3
of the stadium, where he gave his name and stated his nationality and then drew lots for the lane in which he was to run. He donned the full set of armor and stood on the starting line, panting in his eagerness for the race, so impatient that he could scarcely wait for the trumpet's starting signal, an awesome, magnificent sight, exactly like Achilles as Homer presents him contesting the battle with the river Skamandros.[102] The whole of Greece thrilled with emotion at this dramatic turn of events and prayed for Theagenes to win as fervently as if each man were running the

101. Theagenes' prowess in running reflects that of his mythical ancestor, Achilles, whose standard epithet in Homer is "swift-footed."

102. *Iliad* 21.203–384. Another instance of Theagenes' assimilation to Achilles. This episode depicted Achilles confronting an elemental force stronger than himself, a useful image for heroic endeavor against the odds.

race himself; for there is nothing to compete with beauty for winning the sympathy of those who behold it. Charikleia's emotion passed all bounds; I had been observing her carefully for some time and saw every conceivable expression pass in succession over her face.

"The herald proclaimed the names of those entered for the race for all to hear, 'Ormenos[103] of Arkadia and Theagenes of Thessaly.' The starting gate opened, and they were off, running at such a speed that the eye could barely keep pace with them. Now the maiden could stay still no longer: her feet began to skip and dance, as if, in my estimation, her soul were flying beside Theagenes and sharing his passion for the race. Who would win? There was no one there who was not affected by the suspense—myself particularly, now that I had been charged to love Theagenes as my son."

"It is not surprising," interrupted Knemon, "that those who were there watching should have felt the suspense; even now my heart goes out to Theagenes. So, I beg you, make haste and tell me whether he was proclaimed the victor."

4 "The race was half-run, Knemon, when, with a slight turn of his head, Theagenes glared at Ormenos, then lifted his shield high, threw back his head, and, fixing his eyes on Charikleia and on her alone, shot forward like an arrow to its mark, and finished several yards ahead of the Arkadian, the margin of victory being measured afterwards.[104] He ran on towards Charikleia, and, unable (or so he made out) to control his momentum, deliberately fell bodily into her arms. And as the maiden presented him with the palm branch, I saw him kiss her hand."

"That victory and that kiss have saved my life!" exclaimed Knemon. "What happened then?"

"Not only do you have an insatiable appetite for tales, Knemon, but you also seem proof against sleep. Here we are in the small hours of the morning, yet you are still wide awake and not at all fatigued by the inordinate length of my story."

"I cannot agree with Homer, Father, when he says that there is satiety of all things, including love.[105] In my estimation, one can never have a surfeit of love, whether one is engaged in its pleasures or listening to tales of it. And if the story being told is the love of Theagenes and Charikleia, who could be so insensitive, so steely-hearted, that he would not be spellbound by the tale, even if it lasted a whole year? So please continue."

103. Literally "speeding," an appropriate name.

104. Something must be wrong here! But no satisfactory emendation of the Greek text has ever been proposed.

105. From *Iliad* 13.636–37:

> there is satiety in all things, in sleep, and love-making,
> in the loveliness of singing and the innocent dance.

"So it was, Knemon, that Theagenes received the crown and was proclaimed victor. Everyone there cheered him on his way, but Charikleia was now utterly vanquished, even more a slave to her passion than before, after seeing Theagenes a second time. For when lovers look one another in the eye, their ardor is reawakened; the sight rekindles their hearts and fuels the flames of love.

"She went home and passed a night as anguished as those that had gone before, if not more so. I spent another sleepless night too, pondering which direction we should take to avoid apprehension, wondering to what land the god was conducting the young couple. All I was sure of was that we should make our escape by sea, reckoning that this was our best chance of success from the lines of the oracle where it said that

cleaving Ocean's swelling tides,
To the black land of the Sun will they travel.

"To the problem of where they were to be conducted I could see but 5
one solution: somehow I had to see the band that had been abandoned with Charikleia and on which Charikles said he had been told her history was embroidered. From the band I could probably discover the girl's homeland and the identity of her parents, though I had already formed my suspicions on this point. Perhaps that was where destiny was leading them.

"So early the next morning I went to call on Charikleia, but I found the whole household in tears, especially Charikles. I accosted him and asked, 'What is all this commotion?'

"'My daughter's sickness has worsened,' he replied. 'Last night was the most uncomfortable she has had.'

"'Wait outside,' I said. 'And the rest of you, leave us. Just have them fetch a tripod, some laurel, fire, and some incense. Then no one whatsoever is to disturb us until I call you.'

"On Charikles' instructions they did as I asked. Having secured our privacy, I launched into a sort of stage performance, producing clouds of incense smoke, pursing my lips and muttering some sounds that passed for prayers, waving the laurel up and down, up and down, from Charikleia's head to her toes, and yawning blearily, for all the world like some old beldam.[106] I kept this up for some time, until, by the time I came to an end, I had made complete fools of both myself and the girl, who shook her head again and again and smiled wryly as if to tell me that I was on quite the wrong track and had no idea what was really wrong with her.

106. Similar spells against the evil eye are still practiced in Greece, usually by old women. The yawning is an important part of the proceedings, the idea apparently being that the healer draws the malignity of the evil eye out of the victim into herself and then dispels it by yawning.

"I sat down beside her and said, 'Take heart, my daughter. Your sickness is trifling and easily cured. You have been touched by an evil eye, possibly while taking part in the procession, but probably while umpiring the race. And I have an idea who was chiefly responsible for casting the evil eye upon you—it was Theagenes, the one who ran the race in armor. I clearly saw him staring at you on several occasions and eyeing you quite forcefully.'

"'Whether he looked at me like that or not,' she replied, 'much joy may it bring him. But what are his origins? Where is he from? Because I noticed that he caused quite a stir.'

"'That he comes from Thessaly,' I said, 'you have already heard from the lips of the herald when he proclaimed his name. The young man traces his lineage back to Achilles, and I think he may well be right, if his stature and looks are anything to go by; they are a sure sign of a pedigree worthy of Achilles—except that Theagenes has none of his conceit or arrogance;[107] his character has a gentle side to temper his pride. But, however great his qualities, I hope he suffers worse pain than he has inflicted, for he has an eye full of envy and has bewitched you with his stare.'

"'I thank you, Father,' she said, 'for your concern on my behalf, but what is the point of baseless maledictions against a man who may have done no wrong? You see, it is not the evil eye that ails me but some other disease, I think.'

"'Why keep it secret then, my child? Why not trust me and tell me so that we can find a way to help you? Am I not old enough to be your father? And, more important, do I not love you like a father? Am I not a friend and soul mate of your father? Reveal what it is that ails you. I will respect your confidence, under oath if you like. So speak without fear and do not feed your pain by refusing to tell of it. Any wound that is quickly diagnosed is easily healed, but one that is allowed to fester is virtually beyond curing. Silence nurtures sickness, but a trouble shared is a trouble halved.'

6 "My words were followed by a short silence, but the look in her eyes was enough to tell me that her mind was a turmoil of shifting impulses. Then she said: 'Give me one day's grace. Then I shall tell you the truth—that is, unless you discover it first, for you do claim to have powers of divination.'

"I rose and left without a word, allowing the girl an interval in which to come to terms with her sense of shame. Charikles hurried to my side.

"'What do you have to report?' he asked.

"'Everything is fine,' I answered. 'By tomorrow she will be free of the complaint that is troubling her, and in its place will come something

107. This recalls Diomedes' assessment of Achilles at *Iliad* 9.699.

else very much to your liking. There is nothing to stop you calling in a physician.'

"And with that I hurried away to prevent Charikles asking any more questions. I had barely left the house when I saw Theagenes pacing around the temple precinct, talking to himself and apparently quite happy simply to keep watch on the house where Charikleia lived. I averted my eyes and walked past, pretending not to have noticed him.

"'Good day, Kalasiris!' he called. 'I was waiting for you. I must talk to you.'

"I turned round with a start. 'Theagenes, my handsome friend!' I exclaimed. 'I did not see you.'

"'How can you call me handsome,' he said, 'if Charikleia does not find me attractive?'

"I made a show of annoyance. 'I shall thank you to stop slandering me and my art,' I said, 'which has already ensnared her and compelled her to love you. Now she is praying to catch a glimpse of you as if you were one of the gods.'

"'What do you mean, Father?' he exclaimed. 'Is Charikleia in love with me? Then why are we not already on our way to her?'

"And with that he set off at a run. But I grabbed his cloak and said: 'Hey there! I know you are a good runner, but wait a minute! Our undertaking is not plunder taking! These are not goods openly on sale at a cheap price to anyone who cares to buy them. This is something that requires a great deal of forethought to achieve a proper result and a great deal of preparation to carry it off successfully. Are you not aware that the girl's father is the most important man in Delphi? Do you not realize that the laws impose the death penalty on people who do what you have in mind?'

"'Death does not matter to me,' he said, 'so long as Charikleia is mine; but still, if you think it best, let us go to her father and ask for her hand in marriage. I shall be a son-in-law for Charikles to be proud of.'

"'He would refuse,' I said, 'not that he could find anything to object to in you, but many years ago Charikles engaged the girl to his own sister's son.'

"'I shall make him pay, whoever he may be!' exclaimed Theagenes. 'No one else shall take Charikleia to wife while I am alive. My hand and my sword will not stand idly by and let it happen!'

"'Hold on!' I said. 'There is no need of anything like that. Just do as I say and take whatever action I tell you. Go home now and take care not to be seen in my company all the time. Come to me alone and in private.'

"He took his leave with heavy heart. The following day I happened to 7
meet Charikles. No sooner did he see me than he ran to my side and

showered me with kisses, exclaiming repeatedly: 'That is what I call wisdom! That is what I call friendship! You have won a great victory! She was unconquerable, but she has succumbed! She was invincible, but you have triumphed over her! Charikleia is in love!'

"Whereupon I started strutting about self-importantly, hoisted an eyebrow, and said: 'Of course, there was never any question of her withstanding my first assault, even without my invoking any of the greater powers. But how did you discover that she is in love, Charikles?'

"'By taking your advice,' he replied. 'I called in the most eminent physicians, as you suggested, and took them to examine her, with promises to pay them everything I possessed if they could find any remedy. As soon as they entered her room, they asked her what the matter was, but she turned her face to the wall and refused to say a single word in reply; only she kept repeating a verse of Homer out loud,

Son of Peleus, far greatest of the Achaians, Achilles.[108]

"'The learned physician Akesinos[109]—you must know who I mean—seized her wrist, despite her protests, and appeared to diagnose her complaint from the pulse; I suppose because it indicates the movements of the heart. He spent some time in scrutinizing her closely, examining and reexamining her from head to toe, then said: "It was a waste of time bringing us here, Charikles. There is nothing at all that medicine can do for her."

"'"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean? Is my daughter done for? Is there no hope for her?"

"'"There is no need to be alarmed," he replied. "Let me explain."

"'He took me aside, away from Charikleia and the others. "Our science," he continued, "professes to treat disorders of the body, and not, in theory, those of the soul, except when it is affected by the disorders of the body and derives benefit as the body is treated. What your daughter has is certainly a disease, but not one of the body. You see, there is no excess of any humor, she is not troubled by headaches, she is not feverish, and there is nothing else physically wrong with her, either in part or as a whole. So we are driven to a different diagnosis."

"'I persisted with my questions and asked him to tell me if he had discovered anything.

"'"Is it not plain even to a child," he said, "that her disorder is one of the soul and that we have here a clear case of love sickness? Can you not see the dark rings under her eyes, how restless her eyes are, how pale her

108. The line is quoted from *Iliad* 16.21, where Patroklos explains to Achilles the dire effects his refusal to fight is having on his Greek comrades. Charikleia, as an educated young lady, no doubt intends her hearers to recall this context.

109. The name is formed from the verb *akeisthai*, "to heal."

face is, although she does not complain of any internal pain? Her concentration wanders; she says the first thing that comes into her head; she is suffering from an inexplicable insomnia, and has suddenly lost her self-confidence. There is only one person that can cure her, Charikles, and that is the man she loves. He is the one you must find."

"'With these words he took his leave, but I have run to you as fast as I could. You are my savior, my god! Even Charikleia recognizes that you are the one person who can assist us. I implored her, I entreated her to tell me what was wrong, but only one thing did she reply: she did not know what was wrong, but she did know that only Kalasiris could cure her. She begged me to summon you to her side. From which, more than from anything else, I deduced that she has succumbed to your powers.'

"'So, we know she is in love,' I replied, 'but can you say with whom?'

"'No, by Apollo!' he replied. 'How could I know that? Who could have told me? But more than all the world I pray that she is in love with Alkamenes, my sister's son, who is the husband I chose for her many years ago, insofar as it is a matter for my choosing.'

"I said that he could easily put his hopes to the test by taking the young man to visit her and letting her see him. The suggestion met with his approval, and off he went. Later I met him again, at the time when the marketplace is full.[110]

"'I have distressing news for you,' he said. 'I think my child must be possessed, she is behaving so queerly. I took Alkamenes to see her, as you suggested, and presented him to her looking his best. But it was as if she had seen the Gorgon's head or something even more horrible. With a piercing scream she averted her eyes to the other side of the room and fastened her hands around her neck like a noose, threatening and swearing to do away with herself unless we went away instantly. We left her more quickly than it takes to tell; what else were we to do in the face of such extraordinary conduct? For a second time I come to you on bended knee. Do not leave her to die and me to be cheated of my heart's desire.'

"'Charikles,' I replied, 'you were quite correct when you said that she is possessed, for she is beset by powers that I myself called down upon her, powers not inconsiderable but strong enough to compel her to act in a way contrary to both her nature and her wishes. There must be a divine counter-power blocking my efforts and combating the spirits that are in my service. So, now or never, you must show me the band that you said was abandoned with the child and passed on to you along with the other tokens of recognition. You see, I fear that it may be steeped in

110. A fairly standard way of indicating the hours before midday, when trade was conducted.

sorcery of some kind, that it may be inscribed with occult spells that are enraging her soul. Perhaps some enemy schemed at her birth that she should live a life without love and die without child.'

8 "Charikles agreed and soon returned with the band. I said I needed peace and quiet, which I persuaded him to allow me; then I returned to my lodgings, where, without a moment's delay, I began to read the band—it was embroidered in the Ethiopian script, not the demotic variety but the royal kind, which closely resembles the so-called hieratic script of Egypt.[111] As I perused the document I discovered that it contained the following narrative.

> I, Persinna, Queen of the Ethiopians, inscribe this record of woe as a final gift to my daughter, mine only in the pain of her birth, by whatever name she may be called.

I froze at the mention of Persinna's name, Knemon, but nevertheless I continued reading. This is what came next.

> That it was not from guilt, my child, that I exposed you at birth as I did and concealed all sight of you from your father, Hydaspes, I swear as the Sun, the founder of our race, is my witness. Nevertheless, I here one day plead my case before you, my daughter, if you live, before the man who saves your life, if heaven vouchsafe you a deliverer, and before the whole human race, by revealing my reason for abandoning you.
>
> Our line descends from the Sun and Dionysos among gods and from Perseus and Andromeda[112] and from Memnon[113] too among heroes. Those who in the course of time came to build the royal palace decorated it with scenes from the stories of these figures: they painted the likenesses and exploits of the others in the men's quarters and the colonnades, but made use of the romance of Perseus and Andromeda to adorn the bedchambers. It was there one day that your father and I happened to be taking a siesta in the drowsy heat of summer. Ten years had passed since Hydaspes

111. According to Herodotos (2.36), the Egyptians had two kinds of writing, sacred and demotic. Diodoros (3.3) adds that in Egypt only members of the priesthood could read the sacred script, whereas everyone in Ethiopia could. The Meroitic peoples of Ethiopia did in fact use two kinds of script, one an adaptation of Egyptian hieroglyphs to their own language, the other a stylized, cursive form that would have been indecipherable to an Egyptian. The latter, however, simply evolved over time from the former and was not reserved for special groups or contexts.

112. Perseus married Andromeda, the daughter of King Kepheus of Ethiopia, after rescuing her from a sea monster.

113. Son of the goddess Dawn (Eos) by Tithonos, and king of Ethiopia. This is a vestige of an archaic view of the world that located the Ethiopians to the east, near the rising sun, which was responsible for their blackened skins (Ethiopian means "scorched-face"). As the Greeks learned more of the real world, these mythical Ethiopians were increasingly identified with the negroid peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, and the eastern legends were transferred to the south.

made me his wife, and still no child had been born to us. But that day your father made love to me, swearing that he was commanded to do so by a dream, and I knew instantly that the act of love had left me pregnant.

The time before the birth was a period of universal celebration and sacrifices of thanksgiving to the gods, for the king hoped for an heir to continue his line. But you, the child I bore, had a skin of gleaming white, something quite foreign to Ethiopians. I knew the reason: during your father's intimacy with me the painting had presented me with the image of Andromeda, who was depicted stark naked, for Perseus was in the very act of releasing her from the rocks, and had unfortunately shaped the embryo to her exact likeness.[114] I was convinced that your color would lead to my being accused of adultery, for what had happened was so fantastic that no one would believe my explanation. So I decided to save myself from a dishonorable death and to do you the kindness of laying you on fortune's uncertain mercies, which were preferable to certain death or, at best, the stigma of illegitimacy. I lied to my husband that you had died at birth, and, in the utmost secrecy, I laid you by the roadside.[115] Beside you I laid as much wealth as I could afford as a reward to the person who saved your life; but chief among the treasures with which I bedecked you was this band that I wrapped around you, the history of your sorrow and mine, written in the blood and tears shed for you by a mother whose first childbearing was the occasion of such grief.

But, my beloved, my daughter of an hour, if you live, be sure not to forget your royal blood. Honor chastity: it is the sole mark of virtue in a woman. Maintain the demeanor of a princess in memory of those who gave you life. Above all, be sure to find among the treasures that I laid beside you a certain ring. Keep it by you always: it was a gift that your father gave me during our courtship, engraved all around with the royal crest and set with a pantarbe jewel[116] that endows it with holy, mystic powers.

This message was the only way I could find to convey all this to you, since heaven has robbed me of your living presence and the

114. This theory of "maternal impression," whereby images seen by the mother were imprinted on her unborn child, was widely recognized by Greek (and later) medical writers. Andromeda, though an Ethiopian princess, was usually depicted with white skin (see Achilles Tatius 3.7; Philostratos *Imagines* 1.29), a sign that the myth was localized in Africa only at a comparatively late stage.

115. It was common for embarrassing, defective, or unwanted (usually female) children to be exposed and left either to die or be rescued. Tokens might be left with them as a reward for anyone who saved the child's life and to allow identification later. The unexpected recognition of abandoned children is a staple of the plots of New Comedy.

116. A precious stone, red in color, impossible to identify. Various magic powers are ascribed to it by various writers. The name *pantarbe* literally means "all-fear."

opportunity to tell you to your face. Perhaps my story will remain unread and useless, but perhaps it will one day work to your advantage. The secrets of fortune cannot be read by men. If you live, my child whose futile beauty served only to expose me to false allegations, what I have written will be a token of your recognition; but if that occurs which I pray never to hear of, then it will take the place of a mother's tears and sorrow at your graveside.

9 "On reading this, Knemon, I perceived the hand of the gods and marveled at the subtlety of their governance. I was filled with a mixture of pleasure and sadness and had the peculiar experience of being moved simultaneously to joy and tears. My heart was thankful that the mystery had been explained, that the riddle of the oracle had been solved, but it was sorely troubled about the course the future might take and filled with pity for the life of man, whose instability and insecurity, whose constant changes of direction were made all too manifest in the story of Charikleia. My mind was filled with the contemplation of many things: whose child she was and whose she had passed for, how far from the land of her birth her exile had brought her, and how she was called the daughter of a man who was not her father after losing her legitimate place in the royal family of Ethiopia. For a long time I stood there, torn between pity for past sorrows and despair for future happiness, until, clearing my mind of such intoxicating thoughts, I decided to set to work to do what I had to do. I went to Charikleia, whom I found alone. She had now ceased to fight her passion, for struggle as she might mentally, her physical distress was too great, her body having quite succumbed to
10 the disease and being now too weak to resist the pain. I ordered her attendants out of the room with instructions that no one was to disturb us, as I was going to employ certain prayers and invocations on the girl.

"'Well, Charikleia,' I said, 'the time has come for you to tell me what is wrong with you, for that was what you promised yesterday. You must stop hiding the truth from one who cares about you and has the power to know everything even if you refuse to speak.'

"She took my hand, kissed it; her tears fell on it. 'Wise Kalasiris,' she said, 'let this be the first kindness you do me. Diagnose my sickness how you will, but do not force me to speak of my distress; allow me at least to spare myself dishonor by concealing that which it is shameful to suffer but even more shameful to divulge. Although I am caused great pain by the malady which is now at its height, I am caused even more pain by not having overcome that malady at the outset, but having instead succumbed to a passion whose temptations I had hitherto always resisted, and the very mention of which is an affront to the august name of virginity.'

"'My daughter,' I said reassuringly, 'for two reasons you are right not to speak of your plight: there is no need for you to tell me what my science told me long ago, and it is quite natural that you should blush to speak of something that it is more seemly for women to conceal. But now that you have had a taste of love, and Theagenes has captured your heart at first sight—this was revealed to me by a voice from heaven—you must realize that you are not the first or the only woman ever to have experienced this pain; it has been felt by many noble ladies and many maidens who were otherwise paragons of virtue. Love is the greatest of the gods, and stories are told that on occasion he masters even gods. You must consider how to make the best of your situation: never to have felt love's touch is a blessing, but once caught it is wisest to keep one's thoughts on paths of virtue. If you are willing to believe this, you may rid yourself of this slur of carnal desire and make your objective the lawful contract of wedlock, so transforming your malady into matrimony.'

"At these words, Knemon, rivers of perspiration began to run down 11
her face, and there could be no doubt that she was prey to all kinds of emotion: joy for what she heard, anguish for what she hoped, shame for what had been detected in her. A long silence; then she said, 'Father, you speak of marriage, and urge me to make that my aim, as if we could be sure either that my father would consent or that my adversary would reciprocate.'

"'As far as the young man is concerned,' I replied, 'we need have no fears. His feelings are identical to yours, and if anything, he is even deeper in love's power than you are. The moment you set eyes on each other, it seems, your souls in some way recognized partners worthy of one another and were affected in precisely the same way. I have played my part too, because of the love I bear you, by using my science to intensify his desire. But your supposed father has another husband in mind for you—Alkamenes, with whom you are not unacquainted.'

"'As for Alkamenes, I had rather my father had my death in mind than my marriage to him,' she exclaimed. 'If I cannot be Theagenes' wife, then I shall go to my fated end! But please tell me how you discovered that Charikles is not really my father, merely supposed so.'

"'From this,' I said, holding up the band.

"'How did you come by that? Who gave it you? After he took me from my guardian in Egypt, however it was done, and brought me here, he took that band from me and ever since has kept it locked away in a casket to protect it from the ravages of time.'

"'How I came by it,' I replied, 'I shall tell you later. For the moment tell me whether you know what is written on it.'

"She replied that, obviously, she did not.

"'It contains the truth about your birth, your nationality, and your station,' I said.

"She begged me to reveal all I knew, so I told her everything, reading through the document in detail and translating it word by word.

12 "When she learned who she was, a pride befitting her birth was awakened in her. She ran to embrace me and asked, 'What should I do?'

"At last the moment had come for me to drop my pretense and offer her my counsel in earnest. I concealed nothing from her.

"'My daughter,' I said, 'my travels took me as far as the land of the Ethiopians, whose wisdom I was eager to learn. There I met your mother, Persinna, for the royal court is ever the home of wise men, and I was held in particular honor for bringing about the apotheosis of the wisdom of Egypt by supplementing it with the wisdom of Ethiopia.[117] When Persinna saw that I was about to depart for home, she told me the whole of your story, having first sworn me to secrecy. She did not dare speak to the wise men of her own land, she said, but begged me to ask the gods first whether you had been rescued after she abandoned you, and then where in the world you might be; for despite searching far and wide she had not been able to discover anyone of your description in Ethiopia.

"'From the gods I learned the whole truth, and I told Persinna both that you were alive and where you were living, whereupon she renewed her pleas for me to search you out and persuade you to return to the land of your birth, for, she said, since the pains of your birth she had lived a sterile and childless existence and was ready, if ever you were found, to confess to your father what had occurred; she was sure that he would believe her as the long years of their life together had given him ample proof of her virtue and because his wish for a child to succeed him was being so unexpectedly granted.

13 "'Such was the favor Persinna begged of me, calling upon me repeatedly to undertake this mission in the name of the Sun, an oath which any wise man is duty-bound to respect. So I have come here to do as she implored me to do, in discharge of my sworn undertaking. Although this was not the reason for my eagerness to visit Delphi, it is a substantial compensation for my banishment, set in store for me by the gods. As you are aware, I have been dancing attendance on you for some time, and all that time I have never omitted to pay you the respect that is your due. But I have kept the truth secret, biding my time for the right moment, waiting until, one way or another, I could get hold of the band to confirm the truth of what I had to tell you. So, if only you will put your

117. Philostratos (*Life of Apollonios* 6.6) says that the wisdom of the sages of Ethiopia surpassed that of the Egyptians, though it fell short of that of the Indians.

trust in me and join me in getting away from here before you are compelled to submit to something distasteful—for Charikles has set his heart on marrying you to Alkamenes—you may be restored to your kinsfolk, to your homeland, to your parents, and be wedded to Theagenes, who is ready to follow us wherever in the world we choose to go. Thus you may exchange the life of an outcast in a foreign land for the throne that is yours by right, where you will reign with your beloved at your side—that is, if one is to put any trust in the gods, in particular in the oracle of Pythian Apollo.'

"And then I reminded her of the oracle and explained what it meant. It was very familiar to Charikleia, for many were reciting it and trying to interpret it. She froze at my words.

"'You say that this is the gods' will,' she said, 'and I believe you. So what am I to do, Father?'

"'Pretend to consent to marry Alkamenes,' I told her.

"'It is hard, even repugnant, to so much as speak of preferring another to Theagenes,' she said, 'but since I have put myself in your hands and the gods', tell me what is the purpose of the deceit, and how will it be prevented from being made reality?'

"'Events will reveal all,' I replied. 'When a plan is disclosed to a woman in advance, it can sometimes cause her alarm, and often an enterprise is executed more boldly if it is carried through without forethought. Just do as I say: in particular, in the present instance you must go along with Charikles' plans for your wedding; everything he has done has been with my guidance.' She gave me her word and was in tears as I left.

"Scarcely had I left the house when I saw Charikles, looking exceed- 14
ingly unhappy and thoroughly dejected.

"'What a strange man you are,' I said to him. 'This is a time when you should be wearing garlands in your hair and joyfully offering sacrifices of thanksgiving to the gods. Your constant prayer has been granted! It needed a great deal of my magic art, but at long last Charikleia's resolve is broken, and she desires to marry. Yet, at the very moment of triumph, here you are, gloomy and glum and almost in tears for some reason or other.'

"'Of course I am in tears,' he replied, 'when my darling daughter is possibly about to depart this life rather than enter into marriage, as you claim—at least if one is to pay any heed to dreams, in particular those that struck such fear into me last night. I dreamed that an eagle, released from the hand of Pythian Apollo, suddenly swooped down and, alas, snatched my poor daughter from my arms and flew off with her to one of the world's remotest extremities, a place teeming with dark and shadowy phantoms. I do not know what he did to her in the end, for my vi-

sion was obstructed from keeping pace with the bird's flight by the immensity of space between us.'

15 "The import of the dream he described was clear, but in an effort to dispel his despondency and deflect him from any intimation of what was to ensue I said: 'For a priest, and the priest of the god with the greatest powers of prophecy at that, you strike me as a pretty poor interpreter of dreams, if, when your dreams foretell your child's coming marriage by using the eagle to symbolize the bridegroom who will take her from you and give you the glad assurance that this will come to pass (for Pythian Apollo signifies his approval and, so to speak, produces her future husband from his hand), you are nevertheless distressed by your vision and force a pessimistic interpretation on your dream. Therefore, Charikles, let us keep our tongues from words of ill omen and comply with the will of the gods by redoubling our efforts to win the girl round by persuasion.'

"He asked what he should do to make her more compliant, and I replied: 'If you have a valuable heirloom, such as a robe woven with gold thread or a necklace of precious stones, present it to her as a wedding gift from her bridegroom and soften Charikleia's heart with this present. Gold and jewels exert an irresistible spell on women. And you must complete all the other arrangements for the ceremony; the wedding must be held before the effect of my magic in forcibly arousing the girl's desire can wear off.'

"'You can be sure that I shall play my part,' said Charikles and hurried away, his joy so great that he could not wait to act upon my suggestion. I learned afterward that in fact he lost no time in doing as I had advised, and presented Charikleia, under the guise of wedding gifts from Alkamenes, with the Ethiopian necklaces that Persinna had laid beside her to prove her identity.

16 "Then I found Theagenes and asked him where his fellow participants in the procession were lodging. He replied that the girls were already on their way home; being unable to make such good speed, they had been sent on ahead; the young men too were homesick and becoming importunate in their demands to be homeward bound. On hearing this, I instructed him what to tell them and what steps to take himself and told him to watch until I gave him a sign that the time had come. Then I took my leave of him and hurried to the temple of Pythian Apollo to entreat the god to make known to me in an oracle how I was to make my getaway with the young couple.

"But, as ever, the divine had outrun any human wit. Heaven speeds those enterprises that are according to its will, and frequently in its benevolence grants our prayers before we have had time to form them. So it was then. Before I could pose my question, Pythian Apollo gave

me a response and made his guidance manifest in events. With no thought for anything but the cares that were weighing on my mind, I was, as I said, hastening to consult the prophetess when I was halted in my tracks by a voice.

"'Join our libations, sir!' called a group of strangers, who were offering a festal sacrifice to Herakles, to the accompaniment of flute music. On hearing this, I checked my haste, for it would have been wrong for me to pass by and ignore a religious summons. I took incense and offered it in sacrifice, then poured a libation of water; the strangers seemed taken aback by the lavish scale of my oblations,[118] but nevertheless they invited me to join them in their feast. Again I complied, and lay down on the couch which they had strewn with myrtle and laurel in honor of their guests. Having partaken of my usual food and drink, I said to them, 'My friends, I have no lack of most excellent food, but I still have no information about you; so it is time for you to tell me who you are and where you are from, for I think it is vulgar and the height of bad manners to join someone's libations and share his table, to sprinkle the sacred salt that is the seed of friendship, and then to depart without even an exchange of introductions.'

"They replied that they were Phoenicians from Tyre, merchants by trade, sailing to Carthage in Libya[119] with an argosy of merchandise from India and Ethiopia, as well as Phoenicia. At the moment they were celebrating this victory feast in honor of Herakles of Tyre,[120] for this young fellow—indicating the man reclining at the head of the table—had been awarded the victor's crown in the wrestling competition at the games here, and so, through him, Tyre had won a resounding victory on Greek ground.

"'We ran into contrary winds as we rounded Cape Malea,'[121] they continued, 'and had to put in at Kephallenia, where this fellow swore that this ancestral god of ours appeared to him in a dream and predicted his coming victory in the Pythian Games. He persuaded us to turn aside from the course we had laid and land here; and now his success has proved the prophecy correct, and he, who before this day was a mere merchant, is now proclaimed a champion of high renown. He is celebrat-

118. Sarcastic, of course. Kalasiris, as we have seen, abstains on religious grounds from animal sacrifice and libations of wine.

119. Originally a Phoenician trading colony founded from Tyre, with which it retained strong links throughout its history.

120. The Phoenician god Melkart, venerated in Tyre, was identified with the Greek Herakles.

121. The southeastern promontory of the Peloponnese, notorious for its changeable winds. The Phoenicians had been unable to make progress westwards and had obviously hugged the coast until they reached the island of Kephallenia at the mouth of the Corinthian Gulf, through which they would have easy access to Delphi.

ing this sacrifice in honor of the god who revealed the future to him, a sacrifice of victory and thanksgiving, but also of departure, for we mean to set sail at dawn, my friend, if the direction of the winds is the same as that of our intentions.'

"'Is that really what you mean to do?' I asked.

"'Indeed it is,' they replied.

"'Then, if you will allow me, I shall travel with you. I have to go to Sicily on business, and, as you know, the quickest route to Libya will take you close by that island.'

"'If you will consent to come with us,' they replied, 'then we shall think our happiness complete, for we shall have the company of a man who is wise, a Greek, and also perhaps, to judge from our short acquaintance, a favorite of the gods.'

"'I shall be pleased to come with you,' I said, 'if you will allow me one day to make ready.'

"'We shall let you have tomorrow,' they said, 'only you must be down by the sea by evening without fail, for there is much to be said for setting sail at night, when the land breezes still the waves and speed vessels on their way.'

"I agreed to do as they asked, having first been given their sworn
17 word that they would not put out to sea before the agreed hour. And so I left them there, still enjoying their music and dancing, which consisted of cavorting to a gay tune played by the pipes in the Assyrian style: at one moment they would leap nimbly high into the air, the next squat on their haunches close to the ground, spinning and whirling their entire bodies like dervishes.

"After leaving them I went to pay a call on Charikleia, whom I found staring at Charikles' treasures, which still lay in her lap, and after her on Theagenes. I told each of them what was to be done and when; then I returned home and awaited events. The next day the following incident occurred: in the middle of the night, when the city was immersed in sleep, an armed band of revelers stormed Charikleia's house. The commander in this campaign of love was Theagenes, who had formed the young men from the procession into a squadron of soldiers. With a sudden outburst of loud shouting they banged their shields, which filled all who heard anything at all of the noise with terror. They had no difficulty in forcing the gate to the courtyard, for the bolts had been tampered with so that it could be opened easily. Torches ablaze, they burst into Charikleia's room and snatched her away. She submitted willingly to this violent assault, which came as no surprise to her, for she knew in advance exactly what was to take place. They also made off with such items as the girl wished to take with her, not a few. Once outside the house, they raised their battle cry and clattered their shields with a fearful din, then

ran the length and breadth of the town, arousing in the inhabitants a terror beyond the power of words to describe: they had chosen to act at the dead of night precisely so as to cause greater alarm, and the echoes of Parnassos[122] redoubled their cries and the din of clanging bronze. And as they ran through the streets of Delphi, endlessly in turn they cried aloud the name of Charikleia.

"When they were outside the town, they rode off as fast as they could 18
go towards the mountains of Lokris and Oita. But Theagenes and Charikleia, in pursuance of our preconcerted plan, did not accompany the Thessalians; instead, taking care not to be seen, they made their way to seek refuge with me. Together they fell at my feet and for some length of time clasped my knees, trembling and quaking and intoning over and again, 'Save us, Father!' That was all that Charikleia could say; her head was bowed, and she was overcome by shame at the extraordinary events that had just taken place.

"Theagenes, however, had further entreaties to make. 'Save us. Kalasiris,' he said. 'We come to you in supplication, strangers in a foreign land, with no home to go to, who have lost everything in order to win one another, the only thing in the world that we desire. Save us! Now our persons are mortgaged to fortune, bound by the chains of a chaste love, cast into an exile self-imposed but innocent. On you depends our only hope of deliverance.'

"His words made my heart bleed. I shed an inward tear for my young friends, a tear of the mind rather than of the eyes, to them invisible, but to me a relief in my sorrow. I raised them to their feet and tried to comfort them, holding out high hopes for the future, for our enterprise had been started with divine blessing.

"'I must go and see to the next stage of our plan,' I said. 'Stay here and wait for me and make absolutely sure that no one sees you.'

"With these words I began to hurry away, but Charikleia seized my cloak and held it tight.

"'Father,' she said, 'it will be the beginning of iniquity, or should I say betrayal, if you go off and leave me alone in Theagenes' care, without stopping to think what an untrustworthy guardian a lover makes when he has the object of his desires in his power, particularly when those who could touch his sense of shame are elsewhere. The flames of his passion burn higher, I think, when he sees his beloved defenseless, with none to protect her. So I shall not let you go until I have Theagenes' sworn word as a guarantee of my safety both on this occasion and, even more importantly, in the future. Let him swear that he will have no carnal knowledge of me before I regain my home and people; or else, if heaven

122. The mountain above Delphi.

prevents this, that he will make me his wife with my full consent or not at all.'

"I found this speech quite admirable and decided without demur that it should be done as she asked. I lit a fire in the grate to serve as an altar and made an offering of incense, after which Theagenes swore his oath, protesting that it was not fair that by a preemptive oath aspersions should be cast on his probity of character before it could be put to the test; he would not be able to display the power of moral choice, for people would think that he was acting under the compulsion of fear of heaven's wrath. Nonetheless, he swore by Pythian Apollo, by Artemis, by Aphrodite herself and her Erotes,[123] that he would in all things do exactly as Charikleia willed and bade him.

19 "While they were calling upon the gods to witness these and certain other vows, I hastened to Charikles and arrived to find the house full of commotion and lamentation. Servants had already brought Charikles the news of his daughter's abduction, and a throng of townspeople had also gathered and was pressing around Charikles in his grief, uncertain what had happened and unsure what to do next.

"'My poor friends,' I shouted, 'how long will you sit here like dummies, saying nothing, doing nothing, as if in this calamity your wits had been stolen too? Will you not take up arms and set off in pursuit of the foe? Will you not apprehend and punish those who have perpetrated this outrage?'

"'There is probably no point,' replied Charikles, 'in trying to do anything about this situation. I see now that this is a punishment imposed by the gods' wrath: once I entered the inner shrine before the proper time, and my eyes beheld that which it is a sin to behold; on that day Apollo foretold that this would come to pass, that in requital for seeing that which ought not to be seen I should be deprived of the sight of that which I loved most. Nonetheless, there is nothing to stop us taking up arms even in the face of divinity, as the saying goes,[124] if only we knew whom to pursue, who is responsible for this appalling act of violence.'

"'It was that Thessalian you thought so much of,' I replied, 'whose friendship you tried to thrust on me too. It was Theagenes and his young companions. Until last night they were visitors to your town, but you

123. Personifications of love (*eros*), usually conceived as small children, like Roman Cupids. All the gods named have some interest in the matter: Apollo as overseer of Delphi and the games and giver of the oracle; Artemis as Charikleia's patron and also as protector of chastity; Aphrodite as personification of the force that might lead Theagenes to act in a way distressing to Charikleia.

124. *Iliad* 17.103–4, where Menelaos, forced to retire from Patroklos's body by Hektor, who has Apollo's assistance, says that if Aias were at hand, he would be prepared to confront the god.

will not find a single one of them there now. On your feet, then, and call a meeting of the people!'

"And that is what he did. The chief magistrates proclaimed a special session of the assembly, and the proclamation was made known to the town by the sound of a trumpet. No sooner was this done than the populace gathered, and the theater became a midnight council chamber. Charikles stepped forward. The mere sight of him at once moved the crowd to tears, wrapped as he was in a black cloak, his head and face smothered with dust and ashes. This is what he said.

"'Men of Delphi, I have suffered more than one man can bear, and this may lead you to think that I have called this assembly and come before you to announce my intention to end my life. But it is not so. True, I suffer enough misfortunes to die many times over; I am alone in the world and under god's curse; my home is now a mere shell, emptied of all the loved ones who shared it with me. All the same, hope, vain hope, the deceiver of all humankind, whispers to me that there is a chance that my daughter may yet be found, and so seduces me into perservering. But the main reason for my continuing to live is this city: I shall not die until I have seen her exact retribution from those who have so wickedly wronged her—unless of course those Thessalian puppies have also robbed you of that pride that tolerates no master and your sense of outrage on behalf of the land of your birth and gods of your fathers. The hardest thing to stomach is that a handful of dancing boys in the service of the sacred mission should with impunity have trampled underfoot the foremost city of Greece and robbed the temple of Pythian Apollo of its most priceless treasure—Charikleia (alas!), the light of my life. How mercilessly heaven hounds me! You know how it extinguished the life of my first child, my own true daughter, along with the light of her wedding torches, how it snatched away her mother to join her before my pain had had time to heal, and banished me from the land of my birth. But after I found Charikleia it was all bearable. Charikleia was my life, my hope, the continuation of my line; Charikleia was all I had to console me, a sort of anchor to hold me fast. But now this anchor has been shorn away and swept aside by this tide of misery; whatever the truth behind it, that is my lot; once again, with fiendish subtlety, it has chosen the cruelest time to make me its plaything, not at a random moment, but from her very bridal chamber, more or less, when her forthcoming marriage had just been made public to you all.'

"He abandoned himself to his grief, but before he could finish what he had to say, he was interrupted by Hegesias,[125] the chief magistrate, who 20

125. The name is derived from the verb *hegeisthai,* "to lead."

thrust him aside and said: 'Gentlemen, Charikles may lament now and hereafter, but let us not drown in the sea of his grief and find ourselves carried along by the current of his tears and thus passing up the time for action, something which is of decisive importance in all things, especially in war. If we leave this assembly now, there is a chance of catching our enemies while they are proceeding with little sense of urgency, secure in the belief that we shall have to make preparations for pursuit. But if by succumbing to self-pity—or should I say by behaving like women—we allow them a greater start through our indecisiveness, then we must inevitably be made a laughingstock, and, what is worse, at the hands of mere striplings. I say we should apprehend them as quickly as may be, impale them alive, and then extend our vengeance to their offspring by stripping their descendants of their privileges. This could easily be done if we can excite the indignation of the Thessalians against any of these miscreants who might escape us, and against their descendants, by passing a decree banning them from taking part in the sacred mission and the propitiation of the hero, and resolving to bear the cost of this ceremony from our own exchequer.'

21 "Even before the applause that greeted this proposal had died away, even while it was still being ratified by popular vote, the chief magistrate said: 'Here is another proposal to vote on, if you will: the holy acolyte should no longer display the torch to those who are competing in the race in armor, for it is my guess that this was the flame that kindled Theagenes' wickedness. Apparently he conceived the idea of abducting her at the very first sight of her. We should do well to eliminate for all time the possibility of anyone ever committing such an act again.'[126]

"Everyone raised their hands, and this motion too was passed unanimously. Then Hegesias gave the signal to commence the expedition, the trumpet sounded a call to arms, and the audience left the theater to go to war; no one could have stopped them as they rushed out of the assembly and into battle. It was not only those of the strength and age to bear arms who went, but a number of children and lads barely out of childhood, making up in zeal what they lacked in years, were bold enough to take part in this expedition. Many women too had men's hearts, despite their sex; they seized whatever came to hand as a weapon and ran after the men, but to no avail, for they could not keep up and had to admit the inherent weakness of the female sex. You would have seen old men too, fighting against age, sheer willpower dragging their bodies along, their zeal railing against their decrepitude. Thus the whole city smarted under the affront of Charikleia's abduction, and a single pain stirred the hearts

126. There is no evidence that the priestess of Artemis was in reality expected to attend the games as Charikleia did. This decree has the effect of providing an aetiology for the usual practice, which might have been familiar to Heliodoros's readers.

of all her citizens. There and then, without even waiting for the day to dawn, Delphi launched itself in a mass pursuit.

Book Five

"Such was the state of affairs in Delphi: they did what they did, but what 1
it was I have no idea. The hue and cry they raised was my cue for flight; so, collecting the young couple, I took them down to the sea, dead of night though it was, and there I put them aboard the Phoenician ship, which was on the very point of casting off, for as the first glimmer of daybreak was at that moment beginning to light the sky, the Phoenicians considered that they had kept their oath to me, having pledged themselves to wait just one day and one night. They greeted our arrival most joyfully and without further ado cleared the harbor, making way under oar to begin with. But when a gentle breeze began to blow off the land, and a low swell started to run under the ship, splashing merrily against her stern, then they stopped rowing and allowed the vessel to proceed under sail. The Gulf of Kirrha, the foothills of Parnassos, the headlands of Aitolia and Kalydon, slipped past as the ship sped by like a bird in flight, and just as the sun was setting, the Oxeiai—the Pointed Islands, whose name describes their appearance—and the Sea of Zakynthos came into view.

"But what am I doing prolonging my tale further at this time of night? Here I am without thinking literally launching my narrative upon a vast sea of ensuing events! Let us break the story at this point and snatch a little sleep. However indefatigable a listener you may be, Knemon, however valiantly you may resist sleep, I think that even you must be wilting by now, for my tale of woe has dragged on far into the night. And I for my part am beginning to feel the burden of my years, my son; and the remembrance of my sorrows numbs my heart and lulls it to sleep."

"Stop then, Father," said Knemon, "though not because I want no more of your story. I do not think that would ever happen, even if you were to go on telling it for dozens of nights and scores of days without a break, for like the Sirens' song it only leaves one hungry for more. But for some time a sort of noise and hubbub of many voices in the house has been ringing in my ears, but though I was somewhat alarmed, I forced myself to say nothing, for my desire to go on hearing what you had to tell me next was irresistible."

"I heard nothing," said Kalasiris, "possibly because the years have dimmed my hearing—for age affects the ears particularly—perhaps also because I had thoughts for nothing but my story. Nausikles, the master of the house, must be back. How has he made out, by heaven?"

"Exactly as I hoped," said Nausikles, appearing suddenly in the room. "Your interest in my undertaking was obvious, my dear Kalasiris, and I could see that in spirit you were with me on my quest; this was apparent from your whole attitude towards me, and the words I caught you speaking just now as I came in confirm it. But who is this stranger?"

"A Greek," replied Kalasiris. "I shall tell you all about him later. But make haste and tell me whether you have had any success, so that we can share your happiness."

"I shall tell you everything in the morning," said Nausikles. "For tonight suffice it to say that Thisbe is mine, but better than before. Now I am fatigued from my journey and by everything else on my mind. I must sleep awhile and refresh myself."

2 With these words Nausikles bustled off to do as he had said he would do. Knemon, however, had been stunned to hear Thisbe's name; he racked his brains in bewilderment and despair to make sense of it; sigh after heavy sigh he sighed, and the rest of the night was a torment to him, so that in the end even Kalasiris, despite having been in a deep sleep, became aware of his distress. The old man raised himself up and, leaning on one elbow, asked Knemon what was wrong with him and what was the reason for his tossing and turning in such an extraordinary manner that he seemed for all the world like a madman.

"I am mad; I must be" replied Knemon. "I have heard that Thisbe is still alive."

"Who is Thisbe?" asked Kalasiris. "How do you come to recognize her name, and why does the news that she is alive cause you such distress?"

"You will hear all about her one day when I tell you my story," said Knemon, "but the point is that with my own eyes I saw and recognized her lifeless body, and with my own hands I buried her on the Herdsmen's island."

"Go to sleep," said Kalasiris. "We shall not have long to wait to learn the truth of this matter."

"I could not," replied Knemon. "You stay here and rest, but I shall surely die if I do not slip out here and now and discover somehow or other what this delusion might be to which Nausikles has fallen victim, or how it is that Egypt is the only place on earth where the dead come back to life."

This drew a little smile from Kalasiris, who then returned to his slumbers. Knemon left the room and, considering that he was lost in a strange house at night, with no light, had exactly the kind of experience one might have expected. Nevertheless, so eager was he to allay the awful suspicion that Thisbe's name had stirred in him that he was prepared to face any ordeal. Eventually, after spending some time wandering

round and round in circles in the mistaken belief that he was all the time exploring new places, he heard the sound of a woman's voice, softly and sadly sorrowing in the darkness, like a nightingale's song of grief in springtime.[127] Her lamentations guided his steps to her room, where he put his ear to the crack between the doors and listened. She was still pouring forth her sadness, and this is what he heard.

"My misery is complete! I thought that I had escaped from the clutches of robbers and eluded certain death by the sword, that I could live out the rest of my days in my beloved's company: it would have been a homeless life in foreign lands, but his presence would have made it the sweetest of all lives. There is no ordeal so terrible that, with him by my side, I could not face it. But now the spirit that from my birth has guided my destiny, its spite still unsatisfied, has given me a short taste of happiness, only to deceive me later. I thought that I had escaped slavery—and I am a slave once more. I thought that I had escaped my prison cell—and I am under lock and key again. I was imprisoned on an island, in a place without light; my present plight is identical, or, truth to tell, even more parlous, for I have lost the one person who had the power and the will to comfort me. Until today a robbers' cave was my dwelling place; a deep abyss, a veritable grave, my home. But my predicament was made easy by the presence of him whom I love more than all the world. There he grieved for me while I yet lived and wept for me when he thought me dead; he mourned me in the belief that I was slain, but now I am deprived even of that consolation; I have lost my comrade in adversity, who ever shared my burden of pain. I am alone and forsaken, a prisoner and full of grief, a victim of the whims of cruel fate. Indeed, my hope that my beloved yet lives is the only reason I have to endure life any longer. My heart, I wonder where you are, what fate awaited you. Perhaps you too are in slavery, alas!—you who were so singularly proud and free and acknowledged no master, save only Love. I pray only that you are alive and that one day you will see your Thisbe; for by that name must you call me, detest it as you may!"

This was more than Knemon could endure; having heard this much, 3
he could not bring himself to stay and hear the rest of what she had to say. Although her first words had encouraged him to think otherwise, the latter part of her outpouring had convinced him that this was indeed Thisbe, and he very nearly fell into a swoon right there by the door. With a great effort he clung to consciousness, and, terrified that someone

127. King Tereus of Thrace raped Philomela, sister of his wife, Prokne, then cut her tongue out to prevent her telling. Prokne discovered the truth nonetheless and in revenge killed Itys, her son by Tereus, and served him cooked as a meal for his father. Tereus was metamorphosed into a hoopoe; Prokne, into a nightingale, which sings perpetually in sorrow for Itys.

might find him there, for the cocks were already crowing for the second time, he took to his heels, tripping and stumbling, blundering into walls and cracking his head time and again against door beams or such objects as were hanging from the roof, until, after taking many wrong turnings, he reached the room where he and Kalasiris were staying and there collapsed on his bed, shaking all over uncontrollably, his teeth chattering loudly. His very life might have been in danger, had not Kalasiris, seeing instantly that all was not well, brought him round by keeping him warm and speaking many a word of comfort to him. Knemon revived a little, and Kalasiris asked him why he was in such a state.

"I am done for," he replied. "Thisbe really is alive, damn her!"

4 With these words he lapsed back into unconsciousness, and once again Kalasiris's attempts to bring him back to life cost him much effort. In fact, however, a supernatural power, whose habit it is in general to make mock of all human life and use it as its plaything, was playing with Knemon and refusing to allow him great happiness without also making him feel some pain. In a short while Knemon was going to experience joy, which heaven therefore was now combining with sorrow, perhaps simply giving another demonstration of its habitual malice—though possibly human nature cannot admit of pure joy without a taint of sadness. Thus it was that that day Knemon was turning away in fear from that which he wanted above all else, and that that which was sweetest to him of all things caused him such terror. For the woman he had heard lamenting was not Thisbe, but Charikleia!

This is what had happened to her: after Thyamis had fallen into his enemies' hands and become their prisoner, and the island had been set alight and evacuated by the Herdsmen whose home it had been, Knemon and Thermouthis, Thyamis's henchman, sailed across the lake at dawn on a mission of reconnaissance to discover what the enemy had done with their captain; their adventures have already been narrated. Theagenes and Charikleia were left alone in the cave, but the extremity of their plight they counted the greatest boon. Now, for the first time, they were alone in one another's company with no one to interrupt them as they hugged and kissed to their heart's content with nothing to restrain or distract them. They instantly forgot their plight and clasped one another in a prolonged embrace so tight that they seemed to be of one flesh. But the love they consummated was sinless and undefiled; their union was one of moist, warm tears; their only intercourse was one of chaste lips. For if ever Charikleia found Theagenes becoming too ardent in the arousal of his manhood, a reminder of his oath was enough to restrain him; and he for his part moderated his conduct without complaint and was quite content to remain within the bounds of chastity, for though he was the slave of love, he was the master of pleasure.

But eventually they fell to thinking of what they should do, and reluctantly they had to consider their appetite for kisses satisfied. Theagenes was the first to speak.

"To live in union with one another, Charikleia, to possess that which we have come to value above all things and for which we have undergone so many travails, such is our prayer, which I pray the gods of Greece may grant. But the human condition is full of uncertainty and subject to constant change; we have endured much and can expect to endure more; now we are obliged to make our way to the village of Chemmis with all haste according to the promises we made Knemon, and what fate awaits us thereafter none can tell; a long and seemingly infinite distance still separates us from the land we hope to reach. Wherefore, come, let us agree upon some signs that will enable us to pass secret messages while we are together, and by which we may track one another down if ever it should happen that we are separated. For when one is on the road, a sign agreed with one's friends for the purpose of finding one another again is a very good thing to have in reserve."

This suggestion met with Charikleia's approval, and they decided, if 5
they were parted, to scratch the following message on shrines, conspicuous statues, sculpted pillars,[128] or stones at crossroads: The Pythian (in the masculine form for Theagenes, the feminine for Charikleia) has gone to the right, or the left, in the direction of such and such a town or village or district, adding a precise indication of time and date. If they were reunited, it would be enough, they said, simply to lay eyes on one another, for all eternity would be too short a time to efface the tokens of recognition that love had engraved upon their hearts. Nevertheless, as a more tangible token Charikleia produced the ring from her father that had been exposed with her, and Theagenes showed her a scar on his knee that he had got hunting boar.[129] They also agreed upon certain verbal signs: Charikleia chose the word "torch;" Theagenes, "palm."[130]

Thereupon they began embracing one another again and weeping, as if (it seems to me) they were offering libations in their tears and swearing oaths in their kisses. Their plans laid, they left the cave. Of all the treasures that were stored there they touched nothing, for they considered riches acquired by robbery to be contaminated; the only items they put in their packs were those they themselves had brought from Delphi and

128. *Hermai,* stone pillars topped with a bust of Hermes and often adorned with a phallus.

129. This assimilates Theagenes to the second great epic hero, Odysseus, whose nurse, Eurykleia, recognizes him by a scar given him by a hunted boar, the acquisition of which is recounted in a lengthy and famous digression (*Odyssey* 19.392–475).

130. The two objects held by Charikleia on the occasion of their first kiss at the armored race at Delphi.

been robbed of by the bandits. Charikleia changed her clothes and stowed her necklace, crown, and sacred robe away in a small bag, concealing them beneath other objects of lesser value; her bow and quiver she handed to Theagenes to carry, a burden which gave him great joy, for the bow was the special attribute of the god they served.[131]

But just as they reached the lakeside and were about to climb into a small boat, they saw a large number of armed men coming across the
6 water towards the island. Their heads swam with horror at the sight, and they stood rooted mutely to the spot, as if fortune's never-ending cruelty no longer had the power to hurt them. It was not until the attackers were virtually on the point of putting ashore that Charikleia finally began to urge Theagenes to make a run for it and hide in the cave in the hope of escaping detection. So saying, she began running, but Theagenes held her back and said: "How much longer shall we flee from a destiny that pursues us wherever we turn? Let us yield to fate! Let us embrace the current that sweeps us along! What do we have to lose? A life of exile and vagrancy! Heaven's incessant mockery! Can you not see the glee with which it forges the chain of our misfortune? After exile come pirates' dens, after the horrors of the sea come worse horrors by land, and in a moment after bandits will come war! A short time ago it held us captive, then it arranged for us to be alone and forsaken; it offered us deliverance and an escape to freedom, but now it has produced men to slay us. To wage this campaign against us is heaven's sport, as if our lives were a drama played on stage for its pleasure. So why do we not cut short its tragic plot and give ourselves up to those whose desire it is to kill us? Otherwise heaven in its desire to bring our play to a melodramatic conclusion may compel us to die by our own hands!"

7 Charikleia was not in total accord with what he said: fate was thoroughly deserving of his abuse, she said, but she could not support his suggestion that they should put themselves voluntarily into their enemies' hands, for they could not be sure that death would follow capture—the power against which they were struggling was not so kind as to permit them a swift release from their misfortunes; no, it was quite possible that the enemy would want to spare their lives and make them their slaves, a fate worse than any death; in which case, they faced the prospect of ill-treatment too appalling to name at the hands of barbarian cutthroats.

"This we must do our very utmost to avoid," she went on. "Our past experiences do offer us some hope of success, for on many occasions before now we have emerged unscathed from situations even more hopeless than this."

131. Apollo, the archer god.

"Let us do as you wish," replied Theagenes and followed reluctantly as Charikleia led the way. But it was too late! They were unable to reach the cave, for while their attention was fixed on those of their assailants in front of them, they were encircled from behind and trapped unawares by a detachment of the enemy that had landed on another part of the island. They were too dismayed to move; Charikleia ran to Theagenes' side so that if she had to die it would at least be in his arms. A couple of the attackers raised their arms to strike them dead, but when the young lovers turned their eyes towards them, their beauty so dazzled their assailants that their anger subsided and their arms dropped to their sides; for even the hand of a savage, it seems, is overawed by beauty; even the eye of a heathen is subdued by the sight of something so love-worthy.

So seizing Theagenes and Charikleia, they took them to their leader, 8
most eager to be the first to bring him the finest piece of booty. In fact this was the only booty that they were to bring him, for no one found anything else, although they searched the length and breadth of the island, and armed men stood all around it like a circle of huntsmen's nets. It had been totally devastated by fire in the earlier fighting. The only thing left was the cave, which was a secret unknown to the newcomers. So Theagenes and Charikleia were brought before the commander, who was none other than Mitranes, the commander of guards in the service of Oroondates, the Great King's satrap in Egypt, who, as we have seen, had been paid a great deal of money by Nausikles to come to the island in search of Thisbe. At the sight of Theagenes and Charikleia being led past him, continually imploring the gods to deliver them, Nausikles, with his merchant's eye for profit, had a bold idea: he leaped to his feet and ran forward. "That's her! That's Thisbe!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "Those damned bandits took her from me, but now, thanks to the gods and to you, Mitranes, I have her back!"

He seized hold of Charikleia and was to all appearances overjoyed, but beneath his breath he whispered to her in Greek so that his companions would not know what he was saying, suggesting that if she wished her life to be spared, she should concur that she was Thisbe. The ruse worked. Hearing him speak Greek, Charikleia guessed that his ploy might work to her advantage and so connived in his scheme, so that when Mitranes asked her her name, she confirmed that she was called Thisbe. Thereupon Nausikles ran to Mitranes' side and showered his head with kisses. He professed great admiration for Mitranes' achievement: the success he had won in today's operation was, Nausikles suggested, outstanding even in his long record of military prowess. Nausikles' words made the barbarian swell with pride, and his compliments turned his head, so that the deception over the girl's name took him in completely. Even so, he was struck by her loveliness, which shone forth

even in her shabby garments like a moonbeam from behind a cloud. However, the trick was too quick for his meager intelligence, and there was no time for second thoughts.

"She is yours. Take her away," he said. And with these words he handed her over to Nausikles, though the way he stared at her so fixedly was ample proof that he was parting with the girl reluctantly and only because he had already accepted payment for her. "But this man, whoever he is"—he was referring to Theagenes—"is to be my prize. Put him under guard and let him come with me. He will be sent up country to Babylon, for he is fit to wait at the Great King's table!"

9 Following this exchange they rowed back across the lake and took their leave of one another. Nausikles went on to Chemmis with Charikleia, while Mitranes took a different road leading towards other settlements subject to him and wasted no time in sending Theagenes, together with a letter, to Oroondates, who was at Memphis. This was the text of the letter.

> Mitranes the Commander of Guards to Oroondates the Satrap. I am sending you a young Greek I have taken prisoner. He is too handsome to remain in my service, too excellent to come before or wait upon anyone but his Divine Majesty, the King of Kings. I humbly accept that you should have the honor of conveying to him who is master of us both a gift of such value and splendor, a jewel the like of which the royal court has never beheld before and will never behold again.

10 Such was his letter, but at the very crack of dawn Kalasiris went with Knemon to find Nausikles, eager for information. He asked Nausikles what success he had had, and Nausikles told him everything: how he had gone to the island and found it deserted; how at first he had not encountered a soul; how he had outwitted Mitranes and won possession of some girl they had discovered by pretending that she was Thisbe; he had done better, he said, by finding her than he would have done by recovering Thisbe, for there was a vast difference between the two, a difference as great as that between man and god. Her beauty was beyond compare and beyond his power to describe in words—particularly as she was in the house, and he could easily show them her.

11 No sooner did they hear this than they began to suspect the truth. They implored Nausikles to command the girl to be brought straightaway, for this indescribable beauty they recognized as that of none other than Charikleia. She was brought to them and at first stood with her head bowed and a veil covering her eyes, but when Nausikles assured her that there was nothing to be afraid of, she raised her head a little. She saw them; they saw her—though they had despaired of ever seeing one

another again. In the same instant they all burst into tears and cried aloud, as though a single sign had been given them all, or one blow had been dealt them all. For some time all that was to be heard were cries of "Father!" "Daughter!" and "Truly it is Charikleia and not Thisbe!"

Nausikles was dumbfounded as he watched how Kalasiris wept as he embraced Charikleia, and tried in bewilderment to make sense of the theatrical recognition scene being played before him, until Kalasiris clasped him in a fond embrace, kissed him, and said: "Most excellent friend, may the gods reward you for this by granting you the satisfaction of all your desires.[132] You have rescued the daughter whom I had despaired of finding, and you have granted me to see the one sight that gives me more pleasure than any other! But Charikleia, my daughter, where did you leave Theagenes?"

At this question Charikleia cried aloud in grief and paused a moment before replying, "He is a prisoner and was taken away by whoever it was that presented me to this man."

So Kalasiris implored Nausikles to tell them what he knew about Theagenes, who his new master was, and where he was taking him. Nausikles realized that these were the children of whom the old man had often spoken to him, and in quest of whom he knew that he roamed the world in grief. He told Kalasiris everything but added that there was nothing to help them in what he had to say, beyond knowledge of the facts: they were destitute, and he would be surprised if Mitranes would consent to release their young friend, even in return for a large ransom.

"We do have money," Charikleia whispered to Kalasiris. "Promise him as much as you like! I have kept safe the necklace you know of, and I have it with me now."

Her words gave Kalasiris new heart, but he was anxious that Nausi- 12
kles should have no idea of the truth, or of the treasures that Charikleia had about her person.

"My dear Nausikles," he said, "a philosopher never wants for anything. His will is a thing of substance. He knows what he may properly ask of the gods, and he receives all that he asks. So all you have to do is tell us where we may find the man who has Theagenes in his power: divine concern will not disregard us; heaven will provide however much we may require to sweep aside the greed that the Persians have for money."

Nausikles smiled and said: "You will only convince me that you can become rich all of a sudden, as if by magic, if you start by paying me the price of this girl's release. You must be well aware that merchants have just as great a passion for money as do Persians!"

132. A close verbal echo of *Odyssey* 6.180, apparently partially disguised by textual corruption.

"I know," replied Kalasiris. "You will have what you ask, of course you will, for your kindness towards us leaves nothing to be desired. You agree to our requests before we have time to make them and consent to return my daughter to me without my having to ask. But first I must pray."

"Certainly," replied Nausikles, "but I am going to make a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the gods, and if you preferred, you could join me in the ceremony—for you are a holy man—and make your devotions then. Ask them to send me some wealth, and get some for yourself too!"

"Do not mock; be not of such little faith," said Kalasiris. "You go ahead and make your preparations for the sacrifice. We shall join you when everything is ready."

13 That is what they did, and it was not long before someone came from Nausikles to summon them to make haste to the sacrifice. They had already agreed on a plan of action and set off with a light heart, the two men walking with Nausikles and the rest of his numerous guests (it was a public sacrifice he had organized), and Charikleia with Nausikles' daughter and the other women, who had only prevailed on her to join them with much coaxing and persistent persuasion; though perhaps she would never have been prevailed upon had she not formed the intention of using the occasion of the sacrifice to pray for Theagenes' safety. They arrived at the temple of Hermes, whom Nausikles considered as his patron god, since of all gods he is the most concerned with markets and commerce, and to whom therefore the sacrifice was being offered. The rite was quickly performed. Kalasiris briefly inspected the entrails: the play of expressions on his face showed that the future he saw foretold was one of alternating joy and sorrow. Then he passed both his hands over the altar, all the while pronouncing an invocation, and drew—or pretended to draw—from the altar fire what he had had in his hand all along.

"This is the price of Charikleia's release, Nausikles," he said, "which the gods convey to you by way of me."

As he spoke, he pressed into Nausikles' hand one of the royal rings. A magnificent, sublime thing it was, its hoop inset with amber, its bezel aflame with an Ethiopian amethyst as big in circumference as a maiden's eye and in beauty far surpassing the amethysts of Iberia and Britain,[133] in which the bloom of crimson is pale and weak: they are like rosebuds just breaking into flower and blushing pink for the first time in the sunlight,

133. According to Pliny (*Natural History* 37.121) the finest amethysts were produced in India. Neither Ethiopia nor Britain is attested elsewhere as supplying these stones. We know, however, that some amethysts came from the area corresponding to Soviet Georgia, called Iberia in antiquity. It seems from the present passage that Heliodoros has misunderstood his source and confused this eastern Iberia with a completely different region of the same name, modern Spain and Portugal.

but from the heart of an Ethiopian amethyst blazes a pure radiance, fresh as springtime. If you held one and turned it in your hands, it would throw off a shaft of golden light that did not dazzle the eye with its harshness but illuminated it with its brilliance. Furthermore, there resides in it a power more authentic than in the stones of the west: its name is no misnomer, it truly is *amethysos,* "proof against intoxication," and keeps its owner sober at drinking parties.[134]

Every amethyst from India or Ethiopia is as I have described, but the 14
stone that Kalasiris was now presenting to Nausikles was far superior to all others, for it had been incised and deeply carved to represent living creatures. The scene depicted was as follows: a young boy was shepherding his sheep, standing on the vantage point of a low rock, using a transverse flute to direct his flock as it grazed, while the sheep seemed to pasture obediently and contentedly in time to the pipe's melody. One might have said that their backs hung heavy with golden fleeces; this was no beauty of art's devising, for art had merely highlighted on their backs the natural blush of the amethyst. Also depicted were lambs, gamboling in innocent joy, a whole troop of them scampering up the rock, while others cavorted and frolicked in rings around their shepherd, so that the rock where he sat seemed like a kind of bucolic theater; others again, reveling in the sunshine of the amethyst's brilliance, jumped and skipped, scarcely touching the surface of the rock. The oldest and boldest of them presented the illusion of wanting to leap out through the setting of the stone but of being prevented from doing so by the jeweler's art, which had set the collet of the ring like a fence of gold to enclose both them and the rock. The rock was a real rock, no illusion, for the artist had left one corner of the stone unworked, using reality to produce the effect he wanted: he could see no point in using the subtlety of his art to represent a stone on a stone! Such was the ring.

Nausikles' amazement at the miracle was exceeded only by his delight 15
at the value of the gem, which he estimated to be worth as much as all that he possessed.

"My dear Kalasiris," he said, "I was only jesting; my request for payment for her release was not meant seriously; I intended to release your daughter to you without payment. But, as you say in Egypt,[135] 'Never to be cast away are the gifts of the gods, magnificent'; so I accept this jewel that the gods have sent me, firm in the belief that this unlooked-for treasure comes to me from Hermes, who with his customary generosity

134. This etymology is specifically rejected by Pliny and Plutarch (*Table Talk* 647C), who suggests that the amethyst was so called because its color was like that of wine so watered down as to remove any threat of inebriation.

135. This must be the meaning of the second person plural verb φατέ. The words that follow are actually a quotation from Homer (*Iliad* 3.65), so it seems that Nausikles too has received a lecture on the Egyptian origins of the greatest Greek poet.

conveyed this gift to you through the agency of the flames. It is true! Look, you can see how the fire still burns in it! Besides, I think that a benefaction that enriches the recipient at no cost to the donor is the best kind there is!"

Acting on these words, he led the way to the feast. The inside of the temple had been set aside specially for the ladies, while tables had been laid for the men in the temple forecourt. When their appetites for the pleasures of the table were satisfied, the tables were removed to make way for wine bowls, and the men sang and poured a libation of departure to Dionysos, while the women danced a hymn of thanksgiving to Demeter. But Charikleia found a private place to perform her own rites, and there she prayed to the gods to preserve her life for Theagenes' sake, and his for hers.

16 The revelries were at their height, the guests had turned to various forms of amusement, when Nausikles held out a bowl of water with no wine added to it and said: 'My dear Kalasiris, we drink your health in pure water, as is pleasing to you, water that has had no intercourse with Dionysos, the god of wine, but retains its virgin purity. If, in return, you were to toast us with the story we long to hear, we could want no finer draught for our entertainment. As you can hear, the ladies have begun to dance to entertain themselves as they drink, but we, if you are agreeable, could want no finer accompaniment to our revels than the story of your travels, far sweeter than any dancing or flute music. As you know, you have many times put off telling me the tale because you were drowning in a sea of troubles; but you cannot keep it back for a better moment than the present—there will never be one! One of your children, your daughter, is here before your eyes, safe and sound, and, with the gods' help, you will see your son very soon indeed, particularly if you do not annoy me by postponing your narrative yet again!"

"Blessings be upon you, Nausikles!" interrupted Knemon. "At your behest all sorts of musical instruments are in attendance at our festivities, yet now you do not give them a second thought and leave them to people with less taste, preferring to hear of things that are truly mystical and imbued with a pleasure that is indeed divine. You are, in my view, showing a very fine understanding of the ways of the gods when you ensconce Hermes beside Dionysos[136] and spice the wine you pour us with the sweet flow of words. I was much impressed by the great expense you had been to in your sacrifice, but I am sure that there is no better way to propitiate Hermes than by bringing as your contribution to the festivities that which is his own special concern—words."

136. Besides being the patron of merchants, Hermes was regarded in late antiquity as the god of eloquence, Hermes Logios. What Nausikles intended as a trader's ritual has become, for Knemon, an appropriate occasion for storytelling under the patronage of the same god. Dionysos, of course, stands for wine.

Kalasiris assented, partly to please Knemon, partly to place Nausikles under an obligation for the future. He told the whole story; the first part, that Knemon had already heard, he told briefly and, as it were, in outline, deliberately omitting some details that he deemed it best Nausikles should not know. Then he went on with the sequel, as yet untold, to his earlier narration, taking the story up from the point where they had 17
boarded the Phoenician merchantman in their flight from Delphi.[137] At first, he went on, the voyage had gone just as they wished, with a gentle wind blowing astern and carrying them along; but when they reached the straits of Kalydon,[138] they had run into the rough waters generally characteristic of that place and received a severe buffeting.

Even on this point, Knemon insisted that Kalasiris omit nothing but tell them the explanation, if he had found one, for the turbulence that is so prevalent in that vicinity.

"At that point," replied Kalasiris, "the wide expanse of the Ionian Sea is compressed into a narrow passage and flows into the Gulf of Krisa[139] through a sort of bottleneck. The pressure drives the water forward to unite with the Aegean Sea, but its onward thrust is stopped short by the Peloponnesian isthmus; divine providence, it seems, has placed that narrow strip of land there to block the sea's way and keep its flood tide from sweeping over the coasts that lie in its path. Naturally enough this creates a backwash of water, which is subjected to greater compression in the vicinity of these straits than elsewhere in the gulf; also, the water running in often collides with that washing back, so that the sea seethes and boils, arching up to the sky in huge, angry waves at the shock of the impact."

This explanation was received with enthusiastic approval by the company, who declared it to be true. Then Kalasiris went on with his story.

"After passing through the straits and leaving the Pointed Islands in the distance behind us, we caught our first glimpse—though we could not be certain—of the heights of Zakynthos, barely visible on the horizon, like a vague cloud. The helmsman gave orders to lower some of the sails, and when we asked why he was trimming the ship's speed when she had such a fair wind behind her, he explained: 'Because if we ran before the wind under full sail, we should come to anchor at Zakynthos in the early hours of darkness, and there would be a risk of our running aground in the dark on one of the many reefs and rocks along this coast. So it is better to spend the night at sea and proceed with lowered sails,

137. This transition is modeled exactly on the beginning of Demodokos's song of the fall of Troy in the *Odyssey* (8.499ff.).

138. The narrows at the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth.

139. Strictly speaking, the Gulf of Krisa (or Kirrha) is the branch of the Gulf of Corinth running up to the port that serves Delphi. Heliodoros here uses it as a synonym for the whole of the larger gulf, apparently unaware that it is identical with the Gulf of Kirrha he located more accurately at 5.1.2.

calculating just how much wind we need to catch to reach the land at daybreak.'

18 "The helmsman did not say this, Nausikles, without it happening as he had said. Day dawned to find us in the very act of dropping anchor. Those of the island's inhabitants who lived around the harbor (which was a short distance from the town) flocked down to the quayside to stare at us, as if they had never seen the like before. They were clearly impressed that a vessel whose construction combined grace with immense size and height should also handle so responsively: it was clear, they said, that such a masterpiece of the shipwright's art could only be Phoenician. But they were even more astounded at our extraordinary good fortune in having made the voyage in winter, when the Pleiades were already beginning to set,[140] without running into foul weather or coming to any harm.

"Even before the stern ropes had been made fast, virtually the whole crew left the ship and hurried off to the town of Zakynthos to buy and sell in the market there. I had been told by the helmsman that they intended to rest up on the island for the winter, so I set off to look for lodgings somewhere near the seashore, rejecting the ship's own accommodation as improper because of the hurly-burly of the sailors, and that of the town as too dangerous, since my two young charges were on the run. I had not gone far when I saw an old fisherman sitting at the door of his house repairing the mesh of a torn net. I accosted him and said: 'Good morning, my friend. Could you please tell me where one might find lodgings?'

" 'Just here, by the headland,' he replied. 'It got snagged on a sunken rock yesterday, and now it is full of holes!'

" 'That is not what my question was about,' I said, 'but it would be very helpful of you if you could find room for us yourself, or tell me someone else who might.'

" 'It was not me,' he replied. 'I was not out with them. No! I hope Tyrrhenos never gets so old and silly as to do such a stupid thing. It is those young whippersnappers who are to blame: they do not know their way around the reefs and put down their nets in the wrong place.'

"Eventually it dawned on me that he was somewhat hard of hearing, so I bellowed at the top of my voice: 'Good day to you! We are strangers here. Please tell us where to find lodgings.'

" 'Good day to you too!' he replied. 'If you like, you can stay with us, unless you are one of those people who insist on grand houses and bring a huge crowd of servants with them.'

140. The reference is to the so-called cosmical setting, when the constellation disappears beneath the horizon just before sunrise. In Greece this occurs around the end of October, which coincides with the onset of wintry, stormy weather. The setting of the Pleiades was thus widely taken as marking the suspension of navigation until the return of spring.

"I told him that there were just three of us, myself and my two children.

" 'That is nice,' he said, 'nearly the same as us. You will find us just one more in number. I still have two sons living at home, you see; the older ones are married now and have homes of their own to run. The boys' nurse makes four; their mother died not long ago, you see. So, my good sir, do not hesitate. You can be sure that we shall be pleased to welcome someone who, even on a first acquaintance, is obviously a well-bred gentleman.'

"I accepted his invitation and soon returned with Theagenes and Charikleia. The old man greeted us warmly and allocated us the sunnier side of the house. To begin with the winter passed pleasantly enough: we spent our days with our hosts, parting from them only when it was time to go to bed. Charikleia shared a room with the nurse, Theagenes and I had a room to ourselves, while Tyrrhenos and his sons slept in another. We ate our meals together; we provided most of the food, though Tyrrhenos regaled his young guests with huge quantities of fish from the sea. Usually he would go out fishing by himself, but sometimes we would while away an idle hour by joining him on one of his expeditions. He was a master of his craft in all its forms, with a technique to suit every season. The fellow was so successful and always had such a good catch that his patiently acquired skills were generally taken for the favoritism of fortune.

"But, as the saying goes, the unfortunate can nowhere escape their 19
misfortune.[141] Even in that lonely spot Charikleia's beauty attracted unwelcome attention. Our shipmate, that Tyrian merchant turned Pythian champion, came to me many times in private and wearied me to the point of annoyance with his persistent entreaties that I—whom he took for Charikleia's father—should grant him her hand in marriage. He loudly sang his own praises, in turns reciting his noble pedigree and reckoning up the riches he had with him: the ship was his own private property, he said, and he was the owner of most of the cargo she was carrying—gold, priceless gems, and silken raiment; he also spoke of his victory in the Pythian Games, which he considered as greatly enhancing his standing, and of much else besides. I used our penurious circumstances as an excuse and said that I could never bring myself to marry my daughter to a man who lived in foreign parts and in a country so far removed from Egypt, but he replied: 'Let us have no more of this, Father! In the girl's person I shall consider myself to have received a magnificent dowry worth many talents, worth all the world's riches. And I shall adopt your nation and homeland as my own, abandoning my voyage to Carthage and sailing with you wherever you choose to go.'

141. Source unknown.

20 "Seeing that far from abandoning his suit he in fact continued to press it with excessive fervor, not a single day passing without his tedious entreaties on the same subject, I decided to stall the Phoenician for a while with fair promises, for I was afraid that we might even become the victims of an act of violence on the island. I gave him my word that all would be accomplished when I reached Egypt.

"But I had scarcely won a moment's respite from his attentions when, as the saying goes, wave upon wave of evil fortune broke over me:[142] a few days later Tyrrhenos took me to a certain headland that jutted out into the sea like a bent arm and said: 'Kalasiris, I swear to you by Poseidon, Lord of the Ocean, and by the other gods who inhabit the sea, that I love you as a brother, and your children as much as my own children. I have come to tell you of a certain matter that has arisen. Unpleasant it may be, but it would be wrong for me to keep quiet about it now after having shared my hearth and home with you, while for you it is of the utmost importance to know about it. There is a gang of pirates lying in wait for the Phoenician merchantman, lurking out of sight in the bay formed by the crook of this point, with lookouts posted in relays to watch for the ship to leave harbor. So keep your eyes open, be on your guard, and decide what is to be done, for you, or rather your daughter, are the object of this typically vicious scheme of theirs.'

" 'May the gods make you the recompense you deserve for this information,' I replied. 'But how have you got wind of this plan, Tyrrhenos?'

" 'I'm known to these people through my trade,' he answered. 'I supply them with fish, for which they pay me above the going rate. Yesterday I was lifting my lobster pots by the cliffs when the pirate captain accosted me and asked, "Do you by any chance know when the Phoenicians are going to leave harbor?"

" 'I realized the point of his question, disguised though it was, and replied, "I cannot tell you exactly, Trachinos,[143] but I think they are going to set sail as soon as spring comes."

" ' "And the girl who is lodging with you," he said, "will she be sailing with them?"

" ' "I am not sure," I said. "But why are you so curious?"

" ' "Because I am madly in love with her," he replied. "I have only seen her once, but it was enough. I cannot remember ever having seen such beauty, though plenty of women who were pretty enough have been my prisoners."

142. Perhaps from Euripides *Ion* 927ff.:

> for just when
> I banished from my heart a wave of trouble
> A second rose at the stern.

143. The name is connected with the adjective *trachys,* "rough," "savage," "cruel."

" 'In an attempt to inveigle him into revealing the whole of his plans, I asked: "So why do you have to get entangled with the Phoenicians at all? Why not snatch her from my house, and so get her without spilling a drop of blood before they put out to sea?"

" ' "Even pirates," he replied, "retain a certain conscience and consideration for their friends. I am sparing you all the unpleasantness you would be caused when people started asking awkward questions about the disappearance of your guests; and besides, at a single stroke I intend to win the two prizes I want above all else—the riches of the ship and the hand of the girl. I should certainly lose the first of these if I attempted the job on land. In any case, anything of that kind would be risky close to the town, for people would raise the alarm and give chase in no time at all."

" 'I warmly commended his good sense and took my leave of him, but in revealing to you the plot that these brutes are hatching I implore you to give your mind to the question of how to safeguard yourself and your children.'

"Having heard his story, I went away in the depths of despair. I 21
racked my brains to find a way out of our predicament, until a solution presented itself unbidden in the shape of the merchant, who accosted me yet again and began talking on his usual subject, thus unknowingly giving me the inspiration for a plan. Concealing from him such parts of Tyrrhenos's information as I chose not to tell him, I revealed to him no more than that one of the local people had it in mind to kidnap the girl and that he was too formidable an opponent for the merchant to contemplate open resistance.

" 'But,' I went on, 'I would far rather betroth my daughter to you, partly because of our previous acquaintance, partly because of your great wealth, but above all because I already have your word that you will live in Egypt if you win her hand. So, if you really do want to marry her, we must make haste to set sail and leave this place, before it is too late, and we become the victims of something that we are powerless to resist.'

"He was overjoyed to hear my words. 'Excellent, Father!' he exclaimed, moving closer and kissing me on the head. He asked when I wanted them to put out to sea, explaining that though it was not yet the season for sailing, it was nevertheless possible for us to avoid the plot that was hatching against us by moving to another anchorage and awaiting the arrival of spring there.

" 'Well then,' I answered, 'if it is to be my word that counts, I should like to leave this very night.'

" 'Then that is what we shall do,' he replied, and departed.

"Returning to our house, I said not a word of this to Tyrrhenos but told my children that we should have to go back on board our ship that evening after dark. They were taken aback by the suddenness of this an-

nouncement and asked the reason for it. But I put off telling them to another time, saying only, 'In the circumstances this is the best course of action for us to take.'

22 "After a light supper we retired for the night, but as I slept, a vision of an old man appeared to me. Age had withered him almost to a skeleton, except that his cloak was hitched up to reveal a thigh that retained some vestige of the strength of his youth. He wore a leather helmet on his head, and his expression was one of cunning and many wiles; he was lame in one leg, as if from a wound of some kind.[144] He stood by my bed and said, with a sinister smile: 'You, my fine friend, are the only man who has ever treated us with such utter contempt. All others whose ships have passed by the island of Kephallenia have paid a visit to our home and deemed it a matter of importance to learn of my renown. You, on the other hand, have been so neglectful as to grant me not even the common courtesy of a salutation, despite my dwelling in the vicinity. But your omissions will be visited on you very soon. Ordeals like mine shall you undergo; land and sea you shall find united in enmity against you. However, to the maiden you have with you my wife sends greetings and wishes her joy, since she esteems chastity above all things. Good tidings too she sends her: her story has a happy ending.'

"I woke with a start, shivering in fright at my dream. Theagenes asked me what was wrong.

"'We may be too late to board our ship before she sails,' I replied. 'I awoke in panic at the thought. Get up now and pack our things while I fetch Charikleia.'

"The child came when I called, but the noise had awakened Tyrrhenos too, and he got out of bed to ask what we were doing.

"'What we are doing,' I said, 'is acting on your advice and trying to escape from those who have evil designs on us. You have been the kindest of men to us: heaven preserve you for it! One final favor I ask of you: take your boat over to Ithake and make an offering to Odysseus on our behalf. Ask him to temper his wrath against us, for he has appeared to me this very night and told me that he is angry at having been slighted.'

"Tyrrhenos promised to do as I asked, and walked with us as far as our ship, weeping bitterly and wishing us a safe and successful voyage.

144. This description contains a number of Homeric allusions that would have the effect, for an educated reader, of identifying the apparition before Kalasiris solves the riddle by naming him at 5.22.5. The withering of age refers to the disguise given by Athene at *Odyssey* 13.398ff.; the strong thigh comes from *Odyssey* 18.66ff.; the leather helmet from *Iliad* 10.261ff.; the Homeric words for "cunning" and "of many wiles" from *Odyssey* 13.332 and 1.1, respectively; the wound in the leg is the boar-inflicted scar from *Odyssey* 19.392ff.

"Why bore you with too many details? We put out to sea just as the morning star appeared in the sky. To begin with the crew had been vehemently opposed to our departure, but eventually they were won round by our Tyrian merchant, who told them that he had had forewarning of an attack by pirates and was taking evasive action. He thought this was a fiction: did he but know it, his words were true! Buffeted by gales, lashed by a storm too violent to resist, pounded by a sea swell that words are not adequate to describe, we narrowly escaped with our lives and beached our ship on a headland in Crete, one of our rudders gone[145] and most of our rigging smashed. We decided to stay on the island for a few days to repair the vessel and recover our own strength.

"This done, the resumption of our voyage was fixed for the day of the moon's reappearance after her conjunction with the sun. This time we set sail to the sound of gentle spring breezes and sailed night and day while the steersman held the ship on a course for the land of Libya. He said that with such a favorable wind we could sail straight across the open sea without touching land, and he was anxious to reach the safety of a haven on the mainland, for he suspected that the cutter visible off our stern was a pirate ship.

"'Ever since we put out from the headland in Crete,' he said, 'she has been following in our wake and pursuing a course identical to our own, as if on tow. And on a number of occasions, when I have deliberately steered our ship off a straight course, I have seen her change tack to match.'

"Some of those on board were alarmed at his words and urged that 23
we make ready to defend ourselves, but others made light of the danger, suggesting that it was perfectly normal on the open sea for small craft to tail those of great tonnage, using their superior navigational expertise to show them what course to follow, as it were.

"These arguments continued on both sides until the time of day when the yeoman looses his ox from the plough, when the blustery wind began to ease, slackening little by little until it was blowing in our sails with ineffectual weakness, merely rippling the canvas with no forward thrust. Eventually it subsided into complete calm, as if it were departing with the setting sun, or, more truthfully, as if it were collaborating with our pursuers. For as long as we were running before the wind, the cutter and her crew lagged far astern of our merchantman, as one might have expected with our larger sails catching more of the wind; but when we were becalmed upon a smooth sea and forced to take to our oars, they were upon us quicker than it takes to tell, for the whole crew was row-

145. Ancient ships used two *pedalia,* steering paddles.

ing hard, I imagine, to propel their cutter, which was a nimble craft and more responsive to the oar than our vessel.

24 "They were almost alongside when one of our crew who had joined ship at Zakynthos yelled: 'The game is up, my friends! It is a gang of pirates! I recognize the cutter. It is Trachinos's!'

"A tremor ran through the merchantman at this announcement. Though she was becalmed, a storm raged on board her, and she was buffeted by a welter of cries of alarm and despair and disordered running in all directions; as some members of the crew sought refuge in the bowels of the ship, others encouraged one another to put up a fight on deck, while others again resolved to jump into the ship's dinghy and escape. But in the end, while they vacillated, they were forestalled by the onset of fighting, which forced them to make a reluctant stand and defend themselves with whatever came to hand. Theagenes was ablaze with eagerness to join the fray, but Charikleia and I threw our arms around him and restrained him, though only with difficulty. Charikleia did not want to be parted from him even in death, she said, and wished one sword and one thrust to deal the same fate to them both; but I had recognized that our assailant was Trachinos, and was already devising an expedient that would work to our advantage in what ensued—as indeed it did.

"The pirates came alongside, then cut across our bows. In an attempt to take the merchantman without bloodshed, they held their fire and circled around us, forcing us to a standstill. They were like a besieging army, eager to negotiate the capitulation of the ship.

"'You fools!' they shouted. 'It is madness to put up any resistance against such superior and invincible might as ours. Why run the risk of certain death? We are not yet without mercy: you may get into your dinghy and seek safety wherever you wish.'

"Such was their offer, but the merchantman's crew, courageous so long as they were fighting a battle with no dangers, a war with no
25 bloodshed, refused to abandon her. But then one of the pirates, bolder than the rest, leapt aboard the ship and started cutting down all who crossed his path, giving a clear indication that war is decided only by bloodshed and death. As the rest swarmed aboard, the Phoenicians had a change of heart and fell at the knees of the enemy, pleading for their lives and promising to do whatever they were told.

"Although the pirates were already engaged in spilling blood—and the sight of blood tempers an iron heart to steel—they unexpectedly spared the lives of their cowering foe, on Trachinos's orders. But what ensued was an armistice with no formal guarantees, actually warfare of the cruelest imaginable kind, suspended in name only for a peace that was in truth no peace at all: the terms imposed were even more horrible than the fighting had been. Notice was served on them to leave the ship with just

one short tunic apiece, with a threat of death for any who did not comply. But it seems that there is nothing so precious to men as life.[146] So now the Phoenicians, though robbed of whatever hopes they had had of the ship's rich cargo, acted like men who had lost nothing and actually stood to show a profit by scrambling into the dinghy ahead of their fellows, each vying with his shipmates in a race to reach the certainty of survival before they did.

"As we filed past, submissive and obedient, Trachinos caught hold of 26
Charikleia and said: 'It was not in any sense against you, rather because of you, that I have fought this battle, my beloved. I have been following you ever since the day you left Zakynthos, and it was for love of you that I dared undertake such a lengthy and hazardous voyage. Take heart then! I tell you now that by my side you shall be queen of all my men.'

"Charikleia, the clever little minx, ever quick to turn a situation to her own advantage, but also in part taking her cue from what I had told her, discarded the downcast expression that her ordeals had brought to her face, and composed her features into an alluring smile.

"'Thanks be to the gods who inspire your heart with such kindness towards us,' she said. 'But if you wish me to be truly of good heart, and to remain so, then grant me this first proof of your affection. Save my brother here and my father from death; prevent them leaving the ship. If they are taken from me, I cannot possibly go on living.'

"And as she spoke, she fell and clasped his knees in prolonged supplication, while Trachinos luxuriated in the sensual pleasure of her embrace and deliberately took his time before giving her his word. Her tears moved him to pity, and her eyes reduced him to abject slavery. Raising the girl to her feet, he said, 'Your brother's life is a gift I give you with great pleasure, for I can see that he is a young man full of courage and well fitted to share our way of life. This old man is a dead weight, but simply to please you he may live!'

"Meanwhile the sun had completed its daily cycle and set in the west. 27
In the resultant twilight, that no-man's-land twixt day and night,[147] the sea suddenly started to turn rough. This alteration may have been the spontaneous product of the moment, or perhaps the change was due to the whim of some fate. There was a thunderous noise as the gale came sweeping towards us, and in an instant the full force of the blast had struck the pirates almost without warning and filled them with surprised alarm. They had left their own cutter and now were trapped on board the merchantman, whose cargo they were engaged in pillaging, with no idea of how to handle a vessel of her size. All the tasks involved in sailing

146. Alluding to Euripides *Alkestis* 301.
147. The phrase alludes perhaps to Aischylos *Choephoroi* 64.

a ship were performed *ad hoc* by whoever chanced to be at hand, and they tackled various skilled duties for which they had no qualification but rash courage. Some tried to reef the sails, but with no semblance of coordination, while others tried to work the rigging, but with no knowledge of its operation. One incompetent individual stationed himself in the bows, while another, equally incompetent, took charge of the stern and the tiller. We were brought to the edge of destruction, not so much by the force of the storm, which had not yet reached the climax of its fury, as by the incompetence of the helmsman, who stayed at his post so long as there was a glimmer of daylight left in the sky, but deserted it once the darkness reigned supreme.

"We were awash and close to sinking when some of the pirates first attempted to reboard their own vessel, then gave up the attempt, finding themselves rebuffed by the heavy seas, to say nothing of the arguments of Trachinos, who convinced them that they would be able to afford many thousands of such cutters if only they could bring the merchantman and the treasure in her hold safely to land. In the end he sliced through the hawser attaching her to the ship, asserting that this was just another storm they had in tow and urging them to take thought for their future safety: they would be open to suspicion if they put into any port with both ships, for questions would inevitably be asked as to what had happened to the crew of the other one. This seemed good advice, and for a while the one stroke won him double credit. After the cutter was cut loose, they did experience a respite, but not for long. They were by no means out of danger yet, and, pounded by wave after gigantic wave, they began to jettison much of the ship's equipment. Every peril imaginable confronted them, but eventually that night passed, though it seemed never-ending, the next day too, and we ran ashore in the evening on a promontory near the Heracleotic mouth of the Nile.

"Thus, poor wretches, we landed in Egypt willy-nilly. They were all happy to have reached land, but we were downcast and reproached the sea bitterly for sparing our lives; she had begrudged us a death free from outrage and instead had given us up to the land, where even worse horrors seemed to await us, exposed as we now were to the evil whims of pirates. Those scoundrels had barely set foot on land before our worst fears were confirmed: saying that they intended to make a sacrifice of thanksgiving—thanksgiving indeed!—to Poseidon, they began to unload Tyrian wine and other items from the ship and dispatched some of their number to buy cattle from the surrounding district, giving them vast amounts of money and telling them to pay the first price asked.

28 "Very soon they were back, with a whole flock of sheep and pigs. They were welcomed by their comrades who had stayed behind, who

now set about lighting an altar fire, skinned the sacrificial animals, and started to prepare the banquet. But Trachinos took me to one side, out of earshot of the others.

"'Father,' he said, 'I have sought and won your daughter's hand in marriage. I intend to celebrate the wedding today, as you can see, combining that most joyful of festivities with this sacrifice in honor of the gods. I do not want you sitting among the revels with a scowl on your face because no one told you what was happening; but I do want your daughter to hear from you what the future holds for her and welcome it gladly. So I have decided that I ought to give you prior warning of my intentions, not because I want you to confirm them—my position is sufficient guarantee that my will will be done—but simply because I consider it right and proper to secure my bride's compliance by having her father tell her beforehand that she is to be married.'

"I commended his words and feigned joy and all possible gratitude to the gods who had turned my daughter's master into her husband. I with- 29
drew for a minute, and, after some private rumination on our best course of action, I returned to Trachinos and appealed to him for greater ceremony in the celebration of the rite; I asked him to designate the ship as the girl's bridal chamber and command that there be no intrusion, no interruption, so that as much care might be taken over her bridal apparel and general appearance as circumstances allowed.

"'It would be the absurdest thing I have ever heard of,' I went on, 'for one so proud of her birth and wealth, one who is, most important, to be the bride of Trachinos, not even to make use of what finery is available to her, even if time and place do not admit the full dignity of the marriage ceremony.'

"My words put Trachinos in a good humor, and he happily promised that he would command his men to do as I had asked. He commanded that they should unload immediately everything that they would need and thereafter stay away from the ship. This order was obeyed, and they began to off-load tables, wine bowls, rugs, screens, handiwork of Tyre and Sidon,[148] and lavish quantities of everything else necessary for a feast, humping it all unceremoniously off the ship on their shoulders. All this treasure, which it had taken so much hard work and thrift to accumulate, fate had abandoned to be dissipated in a drunken orgy.

"I took Theagenes with me to see Charikleia, whom we found in tears.

148. Compare *Iliad* 6.289ff.:

> There lay the elaborately wrought robes, the work of Sidonian women, whom Alexandros himself, the godlike, had brought home from the land of Sidon.

"'My child,' I said, 'you are indeed no stranger to unhappiness, but tell me: is the cause of your weeping the same as before or something new?'

"'I weep,' she replied, 'for the whole of my life, but above all for my fears about Trachinos's abominable affection for me, which circumstances will probably intensify. Unexpected prosperity has a way of turning men's thoughts in improper directions. But a plague on Trachinos and his loathsome love! I shall cheat him of his desires by taking my own life first; but it was the thought of being parted from you and Theagenes before I die that reduced me to tears.'

"'Your inference is correct,' I said. 'Trachinos does aim to turn this celebration from a sacrifice into a wedding between you and him. Believing me to be your father, he has told me his intentions, though I have known of his insane infatuation for you ever since Tyrrhenos told me of it on Zakynthos; but I said nothing of it to either of you so as to save you premature anguish over sorrows that were still in the future.[149] There was always a possibility that we might escape his schemes. But since heaven has thwarted that hope, and we are now plunged in adversity, come, let us stake our all on a resolute venture! Let us confront the danger head-on! Thus we shall either win a life of honor and freedom or else at least have the consolation of a courageous and chaste death.'

30 "They gave me their word that they would do whatever I told them, and, after explaining to them what they had to do, I left them to make their preparations and went to find the pirate who was Trachinos's second-in-command; his name was Peloros,[150] I think. I said I had something to tell him that was very much to his advantage. He raised no objection and took me to one side where we should not be overheard.

"'I must be brief, my son,' I said. 'Time is too short for a long speech. My daughter is in love with you—and I am not a bit surprised: she has succumbed to your superior quality. But now she suspects that your chief is preparing to turn this celebration into a wedding. Indeed, he has already hinted as much by commanding that she be arrayed in especial finery. So think how you can scotch this scheme of his and win the girl for yourself instead, for she says she will die before she will wed Trachinos!'

"'Have no fear,' he replied. 'For some time I too have felt drawn to the girl and have long been praying for a chance to gain my ends. So Trachinos will either stand aside of his own choice and grant me this bride as the prize to which I am entitled as the first to have boarded the

149. The thought and the diction are drawn from Thucydides (2.39.4).
150. "Monstrous."

merchantman, or else he will find his wedding has a bitter taste,[151] and my right arm will inflict on him the death he so richly deserves!'

"Having listened to this speech, I hurried away so as not to arouse any suspicions. I went to the young couple and encouraged them with the good news that my plan was under way.

"A little while later we were at table. When I saw that the pirates were 31
very much the worse for drink and that their behavior was passing the bounds of moderation, I turned to Peloros—I had deliberately placed myself next to him at table—and whispered, 'Have you seen how beautiful the girl looks in all her finery?'

"'Of course not,' he replied.

"'You can see her now, if you like,' I said. 'You only have to go into the ship, but you must make sure that you are not seen, for, as you know, this is something Trachinos has expressly forbidden. You will see Artemis herself sitting there! But, for the moment, restrain yourself from doing any more than just looking, otherwise you will bring down death on yourself and on her.'

"Without a moment's delay he jumped to his feet, saying that he had to answer an urgent call of nature, and ran stealthily to the ship. And there he saw Charikleia with a crown of laurel on her head, refulgent in her gown of golden weave (she had dressed herself in her sacred robe from Delphi, to be either the mantle of victory or else a funeral shroud); everything around her was radiantly beautiful, creating the illusion of a nuptial bedroom. At the sight of her he was, of course, consumed by a fire of passion; desire and jealousy flooded over him, and the instant he rejoined us it was clear from the look on his face that there was madness in his heart. Scarcely had he resumed his place before he said, 'Why have I not received my reward for being the first aboard?'

"'Because you have not asked for it!' responded Trachinos. 'In any case we have not had time yet to share out our takings.'

"'Well,' said Peloros, 'I claim the girl we captured.'

"'You may have whatever you wish, apart from her,' answered Trachinos.

"But Peloros interrupted him. 'Then you are overturning the pirate law that allows whoever is the first aboard an enemy vessel and the first to brave the danger of combat on behalf of all his comrades to choose whatever he pleases from the spoils.'

"'My dear fellow,' said Trachinos, 'I am not overturning that law, but I base my claim on another rule which says that subordinates must give

151. The unusual word *pikrogamos,* "bitter marriage," is Homeric: see *Odyssey* 1.266, 4.346, 17.137.

way to their superiors. The girl has won my heart, and I demand that my right of precedence be honored and that I be given her for my wife. As for you, if you do not do as you are told, you will soon regret it—I shall smash your head in with this wine bowl!'

"Peloros turned to the company. 'Do you see how hard work is rewarded?' he said. 'One day each one of you will have his prize taken from him like this; one day you will all be the victims of this arbitrary and autocratic law.'

32 "Well, what a spectacle ensued, Nausikles! Like a sea lashed by a sudden squall, you might have said, they were whipped into indescribable turmoil by an irrational impulse, for drink and anger had now taken full possession of them. Some sided with Trachinos, bawling that the leader must be respected; others with Peloros, clamoring that the law must be upheld. In the end Trachinos raised his bowl above his head, intending to brain Peloros with it, but Peloros was ready for him and got in first with a dagger thrust through the heart. Trachinos fell, mortally wounded. For the rest of them this meant open war, with no quarter asked or given. They fell on one another, raining blow after blow, one side claiming to be defending their captain, the other to be championing Peloros and the cause of right. There was one confused howl as sticks, stones, wine bowls, blazing torches, and tables flew through the air and found their marks. I had withdrawn to a safe distance and found myself a spot on a hill where I could watch the fighting well out of harm's way, but neither Theagenes nor Charikleia held back from the action. Acting upon the plan we had agreed, Theagenes armed himself with a sword and to start with joined one of the two parties, fighting like a man completely berserk; and when Charikleia saw that hostilities had commenced, she began shooting arrows from the ship: every shaft found its mark, and she spared none but Theagenes. Her shots were not confined to one side or the other, but she slew whoever was the first to cross her line of vision. She herself was out of sight, but the firelight made her enemies easy targets. They, on the other hand, had no idea what this mischief was, and some even supposed that their wounds were divinely inflicted.

"Eventually they all lay dead, and Theagenes was left to fight one against one with Peloros, a man of enormous courage and a practiced killer, who had butchered victims beyond number. Not even Charikleia's bowmanship could help him now: she longed desperately to come to his aid but was afraid of missing her aim, for now they were locked in a hand-to-hand tussle. But in the end Peloros had to admit defeat, for Charikleia, unable to give Theagenes any material assistance, sent words winging to his aid instead. 'Have courage, my beloved!' she called.

"From that moment Theagenes had much the better of Peloros. It was as if her voice had brought him new strength and new heart and proved

that the prize for which they were contending was still his for the winning. With renewed vigor he hurled himself upon Peloros, despite the pain of his numerous wounds, and aimed a sword stroke at his head. Peloros ducked a little to one side; the blade missed its mark but, grazing past the pirate's shoulder, severed his arm at the joint of the elbow.[152] Peloros had had enough; he turned tail and ran, with Theagenes in hot pursuit.

"What happened after that I cannot say, except that I did not see 33
Theagenes return, for I stayed on my hilltop, too timid to venture across a battlefield in the dark. But Charikleia saw him sure enough. Day dawned to reveal him lying at her feet like a dead man, with Charikleia sitting over him, weeping, obviously wanting to take her own life but dissuaded from doing so by a faint hope that the young man just might come through alive. But to my sorrow I did not have time to speak to them, to hear of their woes, to ease their distress with words of comfort, to do what I could for them in their hour of need; for, without a moment's respite, perils from the sea were succeeded by perils from the land. I was just making my way down the hillside, having seen day dawn, when a troop of Egyptian bandits came racing down, evidently from the mountain overlooking the beach. The young couple were already in their power, and in a minute or two they were leading them away, also taking with them as much of the ship's cargo as they could carry. Vainly, pointlessly, I tried to follow them at a safe distance, lamenting their fate and mine. There was nothing I could do to help, and I thought it best not to tangle with the bandits but to husband my strength in the hope of being able to come to my children's aid. But my strength failed me, of course! My age prevented me from keeping up with the fast pace the Egyptians set over the steep hill-paths, and I fell behind. And it is only thanks to the gods' favor and your kindness, Nausikles, that I am now reunited with my daughter: I have had no part to play in her deliverance; my only contribution has been my lamentations and ceaseless tears for her."

His story concluded, he began to weep, and the entire company wept with him. The festivities had turned to sadness, not unmixed with a kind of pleasure; for wine disposes men to tears. Finally Nausikles tried to raise Kalasiris's spirits, saying: "Father, you can be of good cheer from now on. You already have your daughter back, and it is only the night that prevents you from seeing your son. At daybreak we shall go to Mitranes and try every means at our disposal to secure the release of your excellent Theagenes."

152. Intended to recall the killing of Hypsenor by Eurypylos in the *Iliad* (5.79ff.).

"That is what I should like," replied Kalasiris. "But now it is time to break up the party. First let us remember the spiritual powers and let us each in turn pour a libation for our deliverance."

34 Thereupon the libation was passed around the table, and the guests dispersed. Kalasiris was looking out for Charikleia; he watched the people go past but could not see her in the throng. Eventually a woman told him where she was, and he went through into the shrine, where he found her clinging fast to the feet of the holy statue. Exhausted by her protracted prayers and by the ravages of sorrow, she had slipped into a deep sleep. Kalasiris shed a tear or two and implored the god to let her life take a happier turn. Then, gently, he woke her and led her back to their lodgings. She blushed, apparently at having allowed sleep to get the better of her without realizing. Then she withdrew into the privacy of the women's room, but, lying in bed beside Nausikles' daughter, she was unable to sleep for all the fears and anxieties preying on her mind.

Book Six

1 Kalasiris and Knemon retired to bed in a room in the men's part of the house. The remainder of the night passed more slowly than they wished, but more quickly than they expected, for the greater part of it had already been spent in feasting and the telling of stories whose length only left their hearers hungry for more. Too impatient even to wait for the day to dawn fully, they went to wake Nausikles and begged him to tell them where he thought Theagenes might be and to take them to him as quickly as he could. He made no demur, and they set off together. Charikleia pleaded again and again to be allowed to accompany them, but was reluctantly persuaded to stay behind by Nausikles' assurances that they did not have far to go and would be back in no time with Theagenes. So they left her there, tossed on a tide of conflicting emotions, midway between sorrow at being parted from them and joy at her hopes for the future.

They were walking along the banks of the Nile soon after leaving the village when they saw a crocodile scuttle across their path from right to left and plunge full tilt into the waters of the river. For two of them this was a common sight and occasioned them no alarm—except that Kalasiris said it was a sign portending some impediment to their mission. Knemon, however, was much perturbed by what he had seen: he had not had a clear view of the creature but had merely glimpsed a dark shape close to the ground slither past him; he very nearly turned tail and ran, much to Nausikles' amusement.

"Knemon," said Kalasiris, "I thought it was only at night that you suffered from a faint heart, and that your attacks of timidity were

confined to the hours of darkness. But it seems that your courage was just as heroic in the daytime all along! And it is not just the sound of names that causes you such agitation, but the sight of everyday, harmless objects too!"

"Which god or spirit-being is it," asked Nausikles, "whose name our bold friend here cannot endure to hear?"

"I cannot say," replied Kalasiris, "whether the names of gods and spirit-beings have the same effect on him; this is the name of a human being—and, what is more, not of a man or any famous hero but of a woman, and a dead one at that, according to him! But he shakes with fear if anyone so much as mentions it. That night when you, my friend, brought back Charikleia safe and sound from the Herdsmen, somehow or other and somewhere or other he had heard a passing reference to this name I am talking about, and he did not let me get a wink of sleep; he was at death's door with fright all night, and I had quite a job to bring him round. And if it were not for the fact that it would cause him great distress and terror, I should tell you the name this very minute, Nausikles. Then you would laugh even more!"

And so saying, he let fall the word "Thisbe."

Nausikles had stopped laughing now; taken aback by what he had 2
heard, he stood awhile lost in thought, wondering what the name of Thisbe meant to Knemon, what association he had had with her to cause him to react in such a way.

Now it was Knemon's turn to roar with laughter. "My dear Kalasiris," he said, "now do you see just how great the power of this name is? I am not the only one for whom it holds the terrors of hell[153]—it has affected Nausikles in the same way now. Or rather there has been a complete reversal of roles: now it is my turn to laugh, for I know that she is dead, while our valiant friend Nausikles, who laughs so heartily at other people's expense, has become long-faced and glum."

"Please stop!" said Nausikles. "You have had your own back on me, Knemon; that is enough now. In the name of the gods of hospitality and friendship, by the salt and food with which, I believe, I made you so welcome in my home, tell me, both of you, how you know the name of Thisbe and how you have come either to fear it or use it to make fun of me."

"The tale is yours to tell, Knemon," said Kalasiris. "You have often promised to tell it me, but until now you have always found an excuse of one kind or another to put off doing so. Now is the time for you to tell it, and in so doing you will not only be granting the request of Nausikles

153. Literally "for whom it is a *mormolykeion,*" a mythical bogey used to frighten naughty children.

here but also making our journey less arduous and helping us on our way with your story."

Knemon consented, and he briefly told them all that he had already recounted to Theagenes and Charikleia: that his home was in Athens, his father was called Aristippos, and Demainete had become his stepmother. He told them also of Demainete's illicit infatuation with him, and how, when she was thwarted of her desires, she devised a scheme against him, using Thisbe as the instrument of her intrigue. He went on to describe the nature of the trap she had laid, how he was banished from the land of his birth, this being the penalty imposed on him by the popular assembly as a father-killer; how, while he was staying on Aigina, first Charias, one of his contemporaries, had brought him the news of Demainete's death and how it had come about after Thisbe had set a trap for her too, and then Antikles had told him how Demainete's family had united against Aristippos and induced the people to suspect him of murder, with the result that he had been subjected to the confiscation of his property, while Thisbe had eloped from Athens with her lover, the merchant from Naukratis. Knemon ended his tale by telling how he had sailed off to Egypt with Antikles in search of Thisbe, hoping to find her and take her back to Athens, where he would clear his father's name and bring her to book. In the period that followed he had faced many dangers and experienced many adventures, finally being captured by buccaneers; but he had managed to escape, only to be captured for a second time as soon as he set foot in Egypt by the bandits called Herdsmen. That was how he had met Theagenes and Charikleia; he told them also of the killing of Thisbe and everything thereafter, until he reached the part of his story that was already familiar to Kalasiris and Nausikles.

3 Knemon's story left Nausikles in a state of utter indecision, by turns disposed to admit the truth about himself and Thisbe and then inclined to put off doing so to another time. In the end he kept his own counsel, though only with difficulty, partly by his own decision, partly because something else occurred to prevent his telling all. They had come just about seven miles, and were drawing close to the village where Mitranes was stationed when they ran into an acquaintance of Nausikles and asked him where he was going to in such a desperate hurry.

"Nausikles," he replied, "you ask the reason for my haste as if you did not know that at the moment my whole life is directed towards a single end—namely, doing as I am bidden in the service of my lady, Isias of Chemmis: I work my land for her; I supply her every need; she allows me no rest by day or night; whatever service Isias demands of me, be it great or small, I accept, whatever the cost to me in money or hardship. Now I am on my way to my beloved posthaste with a particular bird she demanded I should bring her—this Nile flamingo you can see here."

"What a considerate mistress you have got yourself involved with," said Nausikles. "How modest her demands are if it is only a flamingo that she has demanded of you and not the phoenix itself that comes to us from Ethiopia or India."[154]

"This is typical of her," he replied. "It is her way to make fun of me and what I do for her. But where are you going? What is your business?"

"We are in a hurry to see Mitranes," they replied.

"Then your haste is pointless and futile," he said. "Mitranes is not there at the moment. This very night he went off to fight the Herdsmen who live in the village of Bessa;[155] he had sent some young Greek he had captured to Oroondates in Memphis—to be taken on from there, I suppose, as a gift to the Great King—but the men of Bessa and their newly chosen leader, Thyamis, mounted a surprise attack and seized the young man, who is now in their possession."

Even before these words were out of his mouth, he was hurrying on 4
his way. "I must not keep Isias waiting," he called. "At this very moment she may be peering around impatiently for me, and I should not want the progress of my love to be obstructed by unpunctuality. She is forever making trumped-up complaints and accusations against me at the slightest provocation and pretending to be indifferent to my attentions."

On hearing these words, they stood awhile rooted in dumb dismay at the way their hopes had been so unexpectedly dashed, but eventually Nausikles tried to raise their flagging spirits by pointing out that there was no need to abandon their enterprise completely because of a momentary setback: now they would have to return to Chemmis and give some serious thought to what they should do next; then they must equip themselves for a trip further afield and go in search of Theagenes among the Herdsmen, or wherever else their inquiries might lead them, secure wherever they went behind a shield of confidence[156] that they would be reunited with him. The hand of god was manifest in what had just happened, for a fortuitous meeting with one of his acquaintances had brought them information guiding them to the place where they must seek Theagenes; their target was the Herdsmen's village, and that was the direction their path should point.

154. There is an untranslatable pun here: the word for "flamingo" is *phoinikopteros* ("crimson-wing"), which suggests the comments on the phoenix. The flamingo is a very easy bird to catch; the phoenix, much harder as (a) it was supposed to appear in Egypt only once every five hundred years, and (b) it is purely mythical. There are several versions of its origins. Herodotos (2.73) says it comes from Arabia; for Ethiopia see Achilles Tatius 3.25; for India, Philostratos *Life of Apollonios* 3.49.

155. The name is attested for a town in southern Egypt, but not for anywhere that would fit with Heliodoros's narrative.

156. This curious metaphor is taken almost verbatim from a speech by Demosthenes (*On the Crown* 97).

5 They were quite happy to fall in with this suggestion, both because his words had, it seems to me, shown them new cause for hope and because Knemon whispered to Kalasiris that he had no doubt that Thyamis would ensure no harm came to Theagenes. So they decided to return—which they did, to find Charikleia in the porch of the house, scanning all points of the compass for their appearance in the distance. When she saw that there was no sign of Theagenes, she gave a piercing scream of sorrow. "So you have come back without him, Father!" she said. "Three of you left this house, and the same three have returned! Theagenes must be dead then! If you have anything to tell me, then in the name of the gods tell it me quickly. Do not make my sorrow more painful by not coming straight to the point. Not to mince words in breaking bad news is a kindness, for it enables the soul to come to grips with its anguish and find a swift remedy for its sorrow."

Knemon cut short her distress. "That is an annoying habit of yours, Charikleia," he said. "You are always inclined to divine the worst,[157] and you are always wrong—I am glad to say in this case. Theagenes is alive and well, by the gods' grace." And then he explained briefly what had happened and where Theagenes was.

"It is obvious from your words that you have never been in love, Knemon," said Kalasiris. "Otherwise you would have known that for lovers even perfectly innocent things are full of fear. They trust no evidence but that of their own eyes where their sweetheart is concerned, and separation from the object of their love brings instant dread and anguish to a lover's heart. The reason is that they are convinced that their beloved would never fail to come to them unless there were a horrible obstacle preventing him from doing so. So, my friend, let us forgive Charikleia, who is displaying all the classic symptoms of love! Let us go indoors and consider our next step."

6 And with that he took Charikleia by the hand and, with a tenderness betokening a love like that of a father for his child, led her inside. Nausikles, who wished to ease the burden of their cares for a time—though he had a certain other matter in mind too—prepared a banquet of extraordinary splendor, a party at which the only guests were they and his own daughter, whom he had made lovelier to behold than she normally was and had arrayed in exceptionally lavish finery. When he judged them to be of sufficiently good cheer, he started to speak as follows.

157. Compare Agamemnon's words to Kalchas in the first book of the *Iliad* (106–8):

> Seer of evil: never yet have you told me a good thing.
> Always the evil things are dear to your heart to prophesy,
> but nothing excellent have you said nor ever accomplished.

"My friends—and may the gods bear witness to the truth of what I am going to say—it would be much to my liking if you were to decide to stay and live here in my house forevermore, sharing my possessions and all that I hold most dear. You see, I have come to think of you not just as guests staying awhile in my home but as true friends, who reciprocate my feelings, and thus nothing you may ask of me shall I consider in the slightest as an imposition. I am ready to help you in whatever way I can in your search for your friends, while I am here. But I must tell you quite plainly that my life is that of a merchant: trade is the field I work in. For some time past the west winds have been blowing fair, opening up the sea to navigation and bringing traders the good news that the sailing season has arrived. The clarion call of business beckons me away to Greece. So I should much appreciate it if you could let me know what your intentions are so that I can arrange my own affairs to fit in with your plans."

Kalasiris paused awhile in silence before replying. "Nausikles," he 7
said, "may your sailing be blessed by divine favor. May Hermes the God of Profit and Poseidon the God of Safe Passage be your companions and guides. May their attendance bring you favorable tides and winds on every sea you sail and ensure that you find a safe haven in every port and a warm welcome for merchants in every town. You have discharged the duties of hospitality and friendship to the full, treating us as honored guests while we were staying with you and not seeking to detain us now that we wish to be on our way.[158] Though it is painful to part from you and your home, which you have allowed us to think of as our own, we cannot evade our duty to do everything possible to recover those whom we love most in the world. Such is the intention of Charikleia here and myself, but what Knemon's thoughts are, whether he is willing to give us the pleasure of his company on our long and winding road or has come to some other decision, he is here to tell us himself."

Knemon was on the point of speaking when his intended reply was cut short by a fit of violent sobbing, and a flood of warm tears ran down his cheeks, rendering him incapable of speech, until eventually he gathered his breath and, with a deep sigh, said, "O wheel of human fortune, you are forever turning, never stable! Many men have suffered on many occasions from the delight you take in making misfortune ebb and flow

158. Echoing Menelaos in the *Odyssey* (15.69ff.):

> I would disapprove of another
> hospitable man who was excessive in friendship,
> as of one excessive in hate. In all things balance is better.
> It is equally bad when one speeds on the guest unwilling
> to go, and when he holds back one who is hastening. Rather
> one should befriend the guest who is there, but speed him when he wishes.

so violently, but none more than I. You took from me my family and my father's home, dispossessed me of my homeland and the city of my loved ones; you drove me ashore in Egypt (to say nothing of what intervened) and delivered me into the clutches of the bandits known as Herdsmen. Then you let me see a glimmer of hope when through your agency I met some people who for all their sorrows were at least Greek. I hoped to live out what was left of my life with them, but now, it seems, you are cutting short even this solace. Which way should I turn? What ought I to do? Am I to abandon Charikleia before she has been reunited with Theagenes? What a cruel and sinful thing to do, O Earth![159] Should I go with her then and join her quest? If we were assured of finding him, efforts spent in the expectation of success would be efforts well spent. But on the other hand if the future is uncertain and merely holds yet more misfortune, then it is also uncertain what end there will ever be to my wanderings. Why do I not crave forgiveness from you and from the gods of friendship and, at long last, begin to think about returning to my homeland and my family? Particularly as, thanks to one of the gods, it seems, such an excellent opportunity has presented itself, Nausikles here having voiced his intention of sailing for Greece. Otherwise something might happen to my father while I tarry here, and then my home would be left with no one at all to inherit in due line of succession. Even if I am to be destitute, it is a proper and sufficient end in itself that at least some remnant of my family should survive in me.

"Charikleia—for it is to you above all that I am seeking to justify myself—I offer you my apologies, which I beg you to accept. If Nausikles will agree to wait a little longer, despite his urgent haste, I shall go with you as far as the Herdsmen, in the hope that I shall be able to return you to Theagenes in person. Then he would be able to see that I have conscientiously looked after the charge he entrusted to my safekeeping, and I should be able to take my leave of you with a clear conscience and high hopes for the future. But if—which heaven forfend—we do not find him, even then I could still be excused, for even then I should not be abandoning you to a lonely fate but entrusting you to the sure protection and fatherly love of Kalasiris here."

A lover is quick to discern another who has fallen prey to the same passions as himself; many signs had already led Charikleia to suspect that Knemon was enamored of Nausikles' daughter, and now Nausikles' words had made it clear to her that he would welcome the match and had busily been working to this end for some time, expending all man-

159. Knemon invokes Ge, a personification of earth, regarded as protector of oaths and often linked with Themis (Right); here the word translated "sinful" is *athemiton*, "against *themis*." Knemon feels himself bound to Charikleia by obligations as strong as sworn oaths and overseen by the same powers.

ner of inducements to purchase Knemon's compliance. In any case she thought that Knemon was no longer a seemly or wholly trustworthy traveling companion.

"As you please," she said. "I am grateful and deeply indebted to you for your kindness in doing what you have done for us. But as far as the future is concerned, you are under no obligation whatsoever to concern yourself about us or to stay with us against your will and face the dangers of a destiny that is not your own. I hope you will win back Athens, your home and family, and embrace with all your heart our friend Nausikles and the pretext which, to use your words, has presented itself to you in his person. Whatever befalls, Kalasiris and I shall fight on until we reach the end of our wanderings, confident that even if no human being should join our quest, we have the gods as our traveling companions."

At this point Nausikles intervened. "May Charikleia's prayers be 8
granted," he said, "and may the gods go with her as she asks; may she be reunited with her kin, as she deserves, for she is spiritually noble and intellectually able.

"As for you, Knemon, you must not be disappointed if you are returning to Athens without Thisbe, especially as you have found in me the culprit responsible for abducting her and spiriting her out of Athens. Yes, the merchant of Naukratis, Thisbe's lover, is none other than myself! And you need not think that you will have to beg for a living and bewail your penury. If you are as agreeable to the idea as I am, I shall make you a rich man and restore you to your home in your own country; if you will consent to marry her, I betroth my daughter, Nausikleia here, to you; she brings with her a magnificent dowry from me, and I ask nothing in return, for I consider that your obligations were met on the day that you told me of your family, your standing, and your nationality."

Knemon did not hesitate an instant in accepting this proposal. Everything that he had long prayed for and desired but never expected to have was now, contrary to all expectation, being granted him in a manner surpassing his prayers. "Consider it done," he said. "I accept everything you offer with great joy."

As he spoke, he held out his right hand, whereupon Nausikles presented him with his daughter and formally pronounced the betrothal. Then, instructing his servants to sing the marriage hymn, he led off the dance himself, turning the festivities they were already enjoying into an impromptu wedding feast.

Everyone was dancing; in festive procession they went to sing an extemporaneous marriage hymn at the door of the bridal chamber; the lights of the wedding vigil illuminated the house. Only Charikleia did

not join in; she stole away from the company and withdrew to her room; she locked the doors securely behind her; now she could be sure that no one would disturb her. Possessed by a frenzy of despair, she untied her hair without inhibition; she tore her dress and said: "Come then, let us dance too, in a manner befitting the malign power that controls our destiny. Let us sing him a song of mourning and dance him a dance of sorrow! Let us smash this lamp to the ground and veil our performance in the black gloom of night! So this is the nuptial chamber our guiding deity has built for us! This is the bridal room he has appointed for us! There is no one in it but me, no husband beside me. The room is empty, widowed of Theagenes, my husband in name only. Knemon is getting married, but Theagenes is wandering the world, a prisoner what is worse, perhaps even in chains. Even that would be a supreme happiness, so long as he were alive. Now Nausikleia is a bride, and I am parted from her who until this night shared my bed; Charikleia is alone and forsaken. It is not on their account that I reproach you, Destiny divine—I hope that they will achieve the happiness they wish for—rather on our own, because you have not been as kind to us as you are to them. The drama in which you have cast us is infinitely protracted, more tragic than anything on stage.

"But what am I doing? This is not the time for such an outcry against the gods: may their will be done in what ensues. Theagenes, the thought of whom is the one thought that brings me any joy, if you are dead, if I am brought to believe the news that I pray never to hear, I shall not hesitate to join you in death. For the present I make you this offering"—as she spoke, she tore her hair and laid the tresses on the bed[160]—"and I pour you this libation from the eyes that you love"—and straightway the rain of her tears watered her bed. "But if you are alive, as I hope, come and sleep beside me, my love; appear to me in my dreams at least. But even then respect me, my friend, and preserve your bride's virginity for lawful wedlock. See, I pretend I can see you here with me, and I embrace you!"

9 And so saying, she flung herself face downwards on the bed. She held the mattress clasped tight in her arms, sobbing and moaning from the depths of her heart, until her sorrow grew past bearing, and a swirling mist stole over her, plunging her conscious mind into darkness and causing her to slip, despite herself, into a slumber in which she remained till long after daybreak. Her failure to appear as normal surprised Kalasiris, whose search for her led him to her room. He knocked loudly on her door and called Charikleia repeatedly by name until he roused her from sleep. She awoke so abruptly that she had no time to collect her wits and

160. Hair was given as an offering to the dead (most notably offered by Elektra on the tomb of Agamemnon), but hair-offerings were also connected with marriage ritual (Herodotos 4.34; Pausanias 1.43.3, 2.32.1). Charikleia's action thus has a double aspect.

mend her appearance: she hurried to the door, drew back the bolt, and opened the door to let the old man in; but when Kalasiris saw her hair disheveled, her dress hanging in tatters over her breasts, her eyes still swollen and bearing the marks of the delirium that had preceded her sleep, he understood the cause and led her straight back to the bed, where he sat her down and wrapped a mantle around her.

Now that she was decently covered, he said: "What is the meaning of this, Charikleia? Why this extravagant and unseemly anguish? Why this senseless submission to adversity? Till now I have always admired your stalwart devotion to propriety in the face of circumstances, but now I hardly know you. Please, let us have no more such silliness! Kindly remember that you are a human being, a creature of change, subject to rapid fluctuations of fortune for good or for ill. So why hasten yourself to an untimely death when possibly a brighter future awaits you? My child, have pity on me; have pity, if not on yourself, at least on Theagenes, who has no desire to live if he cannot share his life with you, who counts his existence a gain only if your life is preserved."

Charikleia blushed, partly at Kalasiris's words, but more at the thought of the condition in which he had found her. For a long time she made no reply, but as Kalasiris pressed her for an answer, she said: "Your censure is well founded, father, but perhaps I may be forgiven; for it is no depraving desire such as ordinary people feel that makes me act as I did in my distress, but rather a pure and chaste longing for one who, in my eyes, is nonetheless my husband for never having consummated our love, for a man of Theagenes' quality. His absence from my side causes me anguish, but, even more than that, doubt as to whether he is alive or not fills me with dread."

"On that count," replied Kalasiris, "you need have no fears. He is alive and will soon be beside you. Such is the gods' will, if we are to believe—as we must—the prophecies that have been made about you, and the man who told us yesterday that Theagenes had been captured by Thyamis while being taken to Memphis. If he has been captured, then he must be safe, for there already exist ties of acquaintance and friendship between him and Thyamis. Now we have no time to lose. We must hurry as fast as we can go to the village of Bessa, where you must search for Theagenes, and I must in addition seek my son—for you know full well from what you have already heard that Thyamis is my son."[161]

Charikleia grew pensive and said, "If Thyamis really is your son, if this is your Thyamis and not a different son of a different father, then we are headed towards a most dangerous situation."

Kalasiris was taken aback and asked her why she said that.

161. We must presume that Kalasiris has on some unnarrated occasion mentioned to Charikleia that he has a son named Thyamis.

"You know," she answered, "that I was taken prisoner by the Herdsmen; while I was with them, my physical beauty, the possession of which seems to bring me nothing but ill fortune, provoked Thyamis too to desire me. Now I am afraid that if we meet him in the course of our search, the sight of me might remind him that I am the woman he loved, and he might consummate by force the marriage that he proposed to me then and that, by various artifices, I managed to fend off."

Kalasiris replied: "I hope that he would never succumb so far to carnal desire as to pay no heed to the visible presence of his father, so far that a father's look could not shame his son into repressing whatever illicit desire he might have. All the same, there would be no harm in your devising some ploy to circumvent your fears. You seem to be adept at thinking of clever ways to deflect and defer unwelcome advances."

10 Charikleia brightened a little at these words and said: "At this moment I shall not pause to ask whether you are being serious or just poking fun at me! Theagenes and I tried a ruse once before, though the events of that day cut it short. I propose that we make use of it again, with better hopes of success this time. Having determined to make good our escape from the Herdsmen's island, we decided to change into the shabbiest clothes we could find and disguise ourselves as beggars before venturing into the towns and villages. If you do not object, let us adopt this guise now and start begging for a living. That way we shall have less to fear from the people we meet, for in circumstances like ours there is a certain security in slender means, and penury is a closer neighbor to compassion than to envy. And we shall find it easier to obtain our daily bread,[162] for in a foreign land food to buy is hard for strangers to find, but food requested is given generously by those who feel compassion."

11 This suggestion met with the approval of Kalasiris, who was now impatient for their wayfaring to begin. So when they met Nausikles, Knemon, and the others, they informed them of their intention to depart. Two days later they set off, having dispensed with the offer of a pack animal and with all human company. Their departure was attended by Nausikles, Knemon, and everyone else in the house, including Nausikleia, who had pleaded incessantly with her father to be allowed to join the throng, for the modesty she felt as a newly wedded bride was outweighed by the spell of love that Charikleia had cast on her.

Half a mile outside the village, they embraced for the last time, Kalasiris the men, Charikleia the women, and clasped right hands, praying, amid a flood of tears, that better fortune would attend their parting. Knemon asked them to forgive him for not accompanying them, having but recently embarked upon the estate of matrimony; he said he would

162. The whole phrase is taken from Thucydides 1.2.2.

catch up with them if the opportunity arose—but he did not mean it. Then they parted. Knemon, Nausikles, and the rest returned to Chemmis, but the first action of Charikleia and Kalasiris was to change their clothes and adopt the guise of beggars, using rags they had ready for this purpose to turn themselves into paupers. Then Charikleia befouled her face, smearing soot and daubing mud on it to make it dirty, and arranged a filthy shawl skew-whiff on her head so that the edge of it hung down over one eye like a crazy veil. Under her arm she slung a pouch, apparently to serve as a receptacle for bits of bread and scraps of food, though in fact it had the more important function of containing her sacred Delphic robe and crown and the treasures and tokens of recognition that her mother had laid beside her when she was abandoned. Kalasiris wrapped Charikleia's quiver in some tattered bits of sheepskin and carried it slung crosswise over his shoulders as if it were merely another bit of baggage. He unstrung her bow, and, as soon as it had straightened out, he held it like a staff, leaning on it with all his weight; and whenever he saw that he was about to encounter someone on the road, he assumed a stoop even greater than his years compelled and developed a limp in one leg; sometimes he had Charikleia lead him by the arm.

When they had applied the finishing touches to their charade, they 12
teased one another a little, telling each other in jest how well the costume became them, and entreated the power that guided their destinies to make these rags the limit of their suffering and inflict no further pain on them. Then they set off in haste towards the village of Bessa, where they hoped to find Theagenes and Thyamis. But it was not to be.

It was nearly sunset, and they were close to the outskirts of Bessa when they saw a host of newly slain bodies lying on the ground. Most could be identified as Persians by their apparel and equipment, but there were a few Egyptians too. The scene was clear evidence that there had been fighting, but who the adversaries had been they could not guess. But as they picked their way through the corpses, looking at them closely as they went in case there was someone close to them among the dead—for the heart is ever in dread for those it loves the most, ever quick to divine the worst about them—they came upon a little old woman clasping one of the Egyptian dead in her arms, making all manner of mournful lamentations. They decided to try to get some information from the old woman, if they could; so they sat down beside her and began by trying to console her and reduce the excesses of her grief. This produced the desired effect; so they asked the old woman (Kalasiris speaking to her in the Egyptian tongue) who it was she was grieving over and what this fighting had been about. In a few words she told them everything: her grief was for her son, who was among the dead, and she had come to the battlefield in the express hope that someone

would run her through and release her from life. In the meantime, however, she was making her son the customary offerings, so far as circumstances permitted, though she had nothing to give but tears and lamentation.

13 What she told them about the fighting was this. "A foreigner, an exceptionally tall and good-looking young man, was being taken to Oroondates, the Great King's governor-general in Memphis; I think he had been taken prisoner by Mitranes, the commander of guards, who had sent him as some sort of special gift, so they say. The men of our village here"—pointing to the nearby settlement—"seized him in a holdup. They said he was a friend of theirs, though I do not know whether they were telling the truth or inventing a pretext. When Mitranes got to hear what had happened, he was naturally very annoyed and so, the day before yesterday, mounted an assault on the village. Now, the people of the village are great fighters: brigandage is a way of life to them, and they hold death in all its forms in contempt, because of which they have many times over left many women without their husbands or sons, as has happened now to me. There had been signs that the attack was imminent; so they laid a number of ambushes in advance. When the enemy attack came, our men emerged victorious, some fighting the foe directly, face-to-face, while those in the ambuscades, with a great yell, surprised the Persians from behind. Mitranes died fighting valiantly, and virtually all of his men died with him, for they were completely encircled and had no way of escape. A few of our men were also killed, and it was heaven's stern decree that my son should be among those few, with, as you can see, a Persian arrow through his heart. And now in sorrow I weep over his dead body, but I think I shall soon be weeping too for the only son who is left me, for yesterday he marched off with the rest against the city of Memphis."

Kalasiris asked the reason for this expedition, and the old woman, adding that this was what she had been told by her surviving son, explained that the men of Bessa, having killed some royal troops and one of the Great King's commanders of guards, could see all too clearly that as a result of their regrettable action this affair would have dire consequences, imperiling their very existence; for as soon as the news reached Oroondates, the governor-general at Memphis with a whole army of men at his disposal, he would brush all opposition aside, subject the village to the "dragnet,"[163] and exterminate the entire population in reprisal.

"Seeing that their lives were at stake, they decided to attempt to find the cure for their rash action in an action even rasher, namely, by pre-

163. This Persian technique is described by Herodotos (6.31):

> The men join hands and make a chain right across the island from north to south, and then move from one end to the other, hunting everyone down.

empting Oroondates' preparations, mounting a surprise attack, and if they found the satrap at Memphis, adding his blood to that already spilt; but if he happened to be out of town—for there is a rumor that at present he is busy fighting a war of some kind with the Ethiopians—it would be relatively easy for them to compel the city's submission when there was nobody there to defend it, thus winning themselves a temporary respite from danger and incidentally achieving a second success by restoring to their leader, Thyamis, the office of high priest, which had been usurped by his younger brother. Should they fail, they intended at least to die in battle rather than endure the ignominy of capture, followed by humiliation and torture at the hands of the Persians.[164] But, strangers, where are you headed for now?"

"To the village," replied Kalasiris.

"It would not be safe," said the old woman, "for you, as total strangers, to present yourselves at this hour of the night to the villagers who were left behind."

"If you came with us to introduce us," answered Kalasiris, "our safety would be guaranteed."

"I cannot at the moment," replied the old woman. "I have certain rites for the dead to perform that can be performed only at night. But if you care to wait—though in fact you have no choice in the matter—move off a little way, find some spot not too far away clear of dead bodies, and wait there. At daybreak I shall accompany you to the village, and my protection will ensure your safety."

Kalasiris repeated to Charikleia all that the old woman had said, and 14
together they moved away. After stepping over the corpses for a short distance, they found a little hillock, and there Kalasiris stretched himself out, pillowing his head on the quiver, while Charikleia sat, using her pouch as a seat. The moon had just risen and was bathing the whole scene in bright light, for it was the second night after full moon. Kalasiris, naturally enough for an old man, especially one fatigued by his travels, lay fast asleep, but the anxieties that beset Charikleia kept her awake; and thus she found herself witnessing a performance which, abominable as it may be, is common practice among the women of Egypt.

Supposing herself now secure against any intrusion or observation, the old woman began by digging a pit, to one side of which she lit a fire. After positioning her son's body between the two, she took an earthenware bowl from a tripod that stood beside her and poured a libation of honey into the pit, likewise of milk from a second bowl, and lastly of

164. Persian punishments and executions were notorious for their prolongation and cruelty.

wine from a third.[165] Then she took a cake made out of fine wheat flour and shaped into the effigy of a man, crowned it with bay and fennel, and flung it into the pit. Finally she picked up a sword and, in an access of feverish ecstasy, invoked the moon by a series of grotesque and outlandish names, then drew the blade across her arm. She wiped the blood onto a sprig of bay and flicked it into the fire. There followed a number of other bizarre actions, after which she knelt over the dead body of her son and whispered certain incantations into his ear, until she woke the dead man and compelled him by her magic arts to stand upright.

Even before this Charikleia had been somewhat alarmed by the scene she was observing, but now her horror at this appalling ritual became so great that she began to tremble with fear. She shook Kalasiris awake so that he was able to see with his own eyes what was taking place. Positioned as they were in the darkness, they were invisible but could observe with little difficulty all that took place in the light cast by the fire, and were also close enough to hear distinctly what was being said, particularly as the old woman had now begun to question the corpse in a somewhat louder voice. What she wanted to know was whether the corpse's brother, her one surviving son, would live to return home.

The dead man made no reply, merely nodded his head in a way that left some doubt as to whether his mother could expect her wishes to be fulfilled or not. Then he suddenly collapsed and fell flat on his face. The old woman rolled the body over onto its back and persisted with her questions. Employing apparently more powerful spells of compulsion this time, she repeated her string of incantations into his ears, and, leaping, sword in hand, from fire to pit, from pit to fire, she succeeded in waking the dead man a second time and, once he was on his feet, began to put the same questions to him as before, forcing him to use speech as well as nods of the head to make his prophecy unambiguous.

While the old woman was engaged in this, Charikleia desperately sought Kalasiris's permission to draw closer and put a question themselves concerning Theagenes. But he refused, saying that the mere sight of such things was unclean and that he could only tolerate it because he had no alternative; it was not proper for a priest either to take part in or to be present at such rites; the prophetic powers of priests proceeded from legitimate sacrifices and pure prayer, whereas those of the profane

165. This scene is intended to recall the episode in the *Odyssey* (11.24ff.) when Odysseus summons the spirits of the dead:

> I, drawing from beside my thigh my sharp sword,
> dug a pit, of about a cubit in each direction,
> and poured it full of drink offerings for all the dead, first
> honey mixed with milk, and the second pouring was sweet wine,
> and the third, water, and over it all I sprinkled white barley.

were obtained literally by crawling upon the ground and skulking among corpses, as the accidents of circumstances had permitted them to see this Egyptian woman doing.

Before Kalasiris could finish, the corpse spoke, its voice a hoarse 15
whisper, sinister and cavernous, as if rising from some infernal abyss.

"Till now I have been merciful to you, Mother," it said. "I tolerated your transgression of the laws of man's nature, your affront to the ordinances of destiny, your use of the black arts to move the immovable, for even in the afterlife we continue to respect our parents so far as we may. But the respect I had for you is now forfeit by your own actions: not content with the first sin of compelling a dead body to stand upright and nod its head, you are taking your sinfulness to the extreme of extorting speech from me as well. With no thought for anything but your own concerns, you neglect the rites that are my due in death and keep me from the company of the other souls. Learn now what I have hitherto kept from telling you! Your son shall not return alive, nor shall you escape death by the sword. The whole of your life you have spent in sinful practices such as this, but soon you will meet the violent end that awaits all such as you. These are forbidden mysteries, cloaked in secrecy and darkness, but you have had the audacity to perform them, not in solitary privacy but in the presence of others, and you even parade the secrets of the dead before witnesses such as these: one is a high priest—and in his case the offense is of lesser importance, for he is wise enough to lock such secrets away in the silence of his heart and never divulge them; besides, the gods love him: his sons are armed; they are facing one another ready to fight to the death, but if he makes haste, his arrival will stay their hands on the very point of joining single combat. What is worse is that a young girl is also witness to your necromancy and can hear every word that is spoken, a young lady distraught with love and wandering over virtually the whole face of the earth in search of some loved one; but after hardships and dangers beyond counting, at earth's farthest boundaries, she will pass her life at his side in glorious and royal estate."

With these words the corpse fell limp to the ground. The old woman realized that it was the strangers that had been spying on her, and there and then she launched herself after them, sword in her hand and madness in her heart. She scoured the battlefield, suspecting that they were hiding among the dead bodies and meaning to kill them if she discovered them, for she presumed that they had spied on her necromancy from malicious and hostile motives. But her fury was so great that she did not look where she was going as she hunted through the corpses, and ended by accidentally impaling herself through the groin on a broken spear that stood upright in the ground. So she died, bringing instant and fitting fulfilment to the prophecy that her son had given her.

Book Seven

1 Kalasiris and Charikleia had had a narrow escape, and it was with a new urgency that they now pressed on towards Memphis; not only were they concerned to put a safe distance between themselves and the terrors of that place, but their haste was also born of the prophecies that they had heard. Even as they drew close to the city, the predictions wrung from the dead man were already beginning to be fulfilled within its walls.

The appearance of Thyamis at the head of his army of bandits from Bessa had been narrowly anticipated by the inhabitants of Memphis, who had closed the city gates just in time, after the alarm had been raised by one of Mitranes' solders, who had escaped from the battle at Bessa and seen that this attack on Memphis was imminent. Thyamis commanded his men to ground arms beside a section of the wall, where he allowed them to recover from the exertions of their forced march. He intended—incredible though it seems—to put the city under siege. At first the people of Memphis had been terrified, for they had supposed the force moving against them to be a large one, but after observation from the walls revealed that in fact their assailants were few in number, they could not wait to muster the few archers and cavalrymen who had been left to protect the city, arm the populace with makeshift weapons, and go outside the walls to join battle with the foe. However, they were prevented by an elderly and widely respected man, who reminded them that although, as chance would have it, the satrap Oroondates was not at that time in Memphis, having marched off to war against the Ethiopians, it was nevertheless right and proper to notify his wife, Arsake,[166] before they took action, for if she gave her approval, such soldiers as were to be found in the city would be more inclined to cooperate.[167] This advice was well received, and they hastened *en masse* to the palace, which, in the absence of the king, the satraps used as their residence.

2 Arsake was a tall, handsome woman, highly intelligent and arrogant and proud by reason of her noble birth, naturally enough for one who had been born the sister of the Great King. But the life she led was disreputable: in particular she was a slave to perverted and dissipated pleasure. Her crimes included being in part responsible for Thyamis's banishment from Memphis. It was just after Kalasiris had, without a word to anyone, removed himself from Memphis as a result of the prophecy concerning his sons that he had been given by the gods. The old man having disappeared and being presumed dead, the office of high priest fell upon

166. An archetypal Persian name, recalling Arsakes, founder of the Arsakid dynasty of Parthia.

167. Reading *συλλαμβάνοι* with the majority of the manuscripts.

Thyamis as his elder son. While he was performing public sacrifices to mark his assumption of the office, Arsake chanced to see him in the temple of Isis: a comely young man, in the flower of his manhood, and arrayed in especial splendor because of the ceremony in which he was engaged. She cast on him eyes of lust and made him signs to hint at her obscene intentions. This, however, elicited no response at all from Thyamis, whose character and upbringing were devoid of all unchastity; far from suspecting the true meaning of her actions, he may have been so absorbed in his holy rites that he attributed them to an entirely different cause. However, his brother, Petosiris, in whom had been festering for many years a jealous desire for the office of high priest, had observed Arsake's advances. Her illicit approaches provided him with the basis of a plot against his brother. In a secret audience, he not only informed Oroondates of Arsake's infatuation but compounded his story with the false insinuation that Thyamis had complied with her desires. Oroondates already entertained suspicions about his wife and needed little convincing. In the absence of firm proof, however, he took no steps against her; besides, the awe and respect in which he held the royal house compelled him to keep to himself such suspicions as he had. But he issued a number of proclamations threatening Thyamis with death, and did not cease until he had driven him into exile, whereupon he created Petosiris high priest in his stead.

That was all past history now. To return to our story, Arsake re- 3
sponded to the crowd that had gathered at her residence to inform her of the enemy attack—something she was already well aware of—and request her permission for such troops as were available[168] to join them in a sortie, by refusing to grant this permission without proper consideration and before she had ascertained the size of the enemy's force, who they were, or where they came from, or had even learned the reason for their attack; their first action should be to go over to the city walls and make a thorough reconnaissance of the situation from there, and then, with additional assistance, they could pursue a course that was both feasible and expedient.

This was adjudged good advice, and without further ado they hastened to the wall, where Arsake gave orders for a pavilion to be erected beneath a canopy of purple embroidered with gold. Then, exquisitely arrayed, she took her seat on an elevated throne, encircled by her bodyguard in their gilded armor. Holding aloft a herald's staff to signify that she wished to negotiate peace, she called upon the enemy's leaders and men of note to draw close to the wall. Thyamis and Theagenes were chosen by their men and stepped forward. They stood at the foot of the

168. Reading *παροῦσι* for *οὖσι*.

wall, in full armor, except that their heads were bare, while the herald proclaimed: "Hear the words of Arsake, wife of Oroondates the supreme satrap, and sister of the Great King. Who are you? What is your purpose? What reason do you adduce for venturing to attack this city?"

They replied that their army was composed of men of Bessa. Thyamis identified himself and said that he had been wronged by his brother, Petosiris, and Oroondates, who had conspired to rob him of the office of high priest, to which the men of Bessa were now restoring him. If he was now reinstated in his priesthood, hostilities would be at an end, and the men of Bessa would return home without inflicting any harm on anyone; otherwise, war and the force of arms would have to decide the matter. If Arsake had any concern for propriety, Thyamis continued, she should avail herself of this opportunity to punish Petosiris for his schemes against her and the wicked and lying slanders about her that he had uttered to Oroondates, which had caused her to be suspected by her husband of an illicit and degraded passion and him to be banished from his homeland.

4 This caused universal consternation among the people of Memphis. They recognized Thyamis, and, although previously, at the time of his departure, they had been unaware of the reason for his banishment, Thyamis's words now aroused their suspicions, and they had no doubt as to the truth of what he said. Most confounded of all was Arsake, who was trapped in a maelstrom of emotion. She was filled with anger against Petosiris, and as she recalled past events, she began to plan her revenge; and as she looked upon Thyamis and then upon Theagenes, her heart was rent in two, torn asunder by the desire she felt for each of them: in one case it was the revival of an old passion, in the other a new and more painful shaft piercing her heart. Her anguish was plain, even to those around her. Nevertheless, after a moment's silence, she regained her composure, like one recovering from an attack of epilepsy, and said: "The whole of Bessa must have been infected by an insane desire for war, particularly you, my friends: such handsome young men, in the first bloom of manhood, wellborn too, as is obvious from your appearance, yet facing certain death just for the sake of a gang of bandits—for if it came to a battle, you would be unable to withstand even the first onset. May the Great King's strength never be so weakened that, even in the absence of his satrap, the merest leftovers of his army in Egypt would not be sufficient to sweep you, to a man, off the face of the earth!

"However, there is no need for extensive bloodletting, I think: the reason for this aggression is a private one that is of no concern to the people at large. I can see no reason why the dispute should not also be settled privately and be brought to whatever end the gods and justice herself shall decide. This is my command," she said. "The people of Memphis and Bessa shall be at peace and shall not wage war on one an-

other when they have no cause to do so. But those who are in dispute over the office of high priest will face one another in single combat, with the priesthood as prize for the victor."

Arsake's words were greeted with a roar of approbation by all the inhabitants of Memphis, partly because they had been induced to suspect Petosiris of dishonest dealings, and partly because they all rather liked the idea of escaping from obvious and imminent danger by letting someone else do the fighting. The majority of the men of Bessa, on the other hand, seemed unhappy with the proposal and disinclined to abandon their leader to risk his life on their behalf, until Thyamis persuaded them to agree to the idea by pointing out Petosiris's lack of strength and martial experience; in combat, he assured them, the odds would be overwhelmingly in his favor. This thought, it seems was exactly what had prompted Arsake to propose the single combat, for she realized both that her ends would be accomplished without any suspicion falling on herself and that, in fighting to the death with Thyamis, who was much the better man, Petosiris would pay a penalty befitting his offense against her. 5

There ensued the spectacle of Arsake's orders being put into effect more quickly than it takes to tell: Thyamis, on the one hand, all eagerness to take up the challenge, was completing his arming systematically and joyfully, while Theagenes, with many a word of encouragement, placed on his head his helmet, surmounted by a splendid crest and glinting with the brilliance of polished gold, and secured the straps on the rest of his equipment; Petosiris, on the other hand, was being manhandled out of the city gate in compliance with Arsake's command and, cry as he might for mercy, was being forcibly prepared for battle.

On seeing him, Thyamis exclaimed, "Theagenes, my dear friend, do you not see how Petosiris is quaking with fear?"

"I do indeed," replied Theagenes, "but how are you going to act in this situation? It is not just an enemy you are fighting against—it is your brother!"

"Quite right," said Thyamis. "Your words have flown unerringly to the mark of my own thoughts. My purpose is to defeat him, god willing, but not to kill him. I hope I should never be such a prey to anger and resentment over past wrongs as to be prepared to purchase vengeance for the past and a degree of honor for the future by spilling my own brother's blood and polluting my hands with the killing of one born from the same womb as I."

"Your words," replied Theagenes, "show you to be a man of nobility and well aware of the bonds of nature. What charge do you have to lay upon me?"

"It would be easy," Thyamis answered, "to make light of the contest that awaits me, but the fortunes of men often have a way of producing strange and unexpected results. If I win, then you will accompany me

into Memphis, where we shall live together as brothers; but should anything untoward occur, then you must take command of these men of Bessa, who are devoted to you, and endure the ordeals of life as a brigand, until god allows you to glimpse a happier ending to your story."

6 Thereupon they embraced and kissed one another tearfully. Without moving from that spot, Theagenes sat down, still in his armor, to watch what happened. Thus, did he but know it, he was affording Arsake the sensual pleasure of looking upon him as she studied his every feature and allowed her eyes to indulge their desire awhile.

Thyamis rushed at Petosiris, who made no attempt to withstand the onslaught but, at the first step that Thyamis made towards him, took to his heels and ran to the gates in a desperate effort to get back into the city; but it was to no avail. He was repulsed by the men posted on the gates, and wherever his frantic flight took him, the people on the walls refused to allow him back in. And so he threw down his weapons and, for the moment, went on running, as fast as his legs would carry him, around the perimeter of the city. Keeping pace behind them ran Theagenes, who, full of apprehension for Thyamis's safety, was determined not to miss anything that happened. He carried no weapons, however, so that no one could suspect him of intending to assist Thyamis in the fight; his spear and shield he had left lying by the section of the wall where he had been sitting beneath Arsake's gaze, thus affording her the consolation of having them, if not his person, in her sight while he joined in the pursuit. Running for his life, Petosiris managed to stay ahead of Thyamis, but only by a very short distance; at every moment it looked as if he was on the point of being caught, but he always eluded Thyamis's grasp by just that margin by which one might have expected a man in full armor to lag behind a man in none. Round the walls they sped, once, twice, but towards the end of their third circuit, with Thyamis leveling his spear at his brother's back and threatening to strike him dead if he did not stand and fight, with the entire population of the city lining the walls,[169] watching like the presiding judges in a theater[170]—at that very moment either some divine power or some fortune that arbitrates over human destiny made the drama take a new and tragic twist, almost as if bringing

169. The pursuit around the city walls is meant to recall the pursuit of Hektor around Troy by Achilles in the *Iliad* (22.137ff., esp. 199ff.):

> As in a dream a man is not able to follow one who runs
> from him, nor can the runner escape, nor the other pursue him,
> so he could not run him down in his speed, nor the other get clear.

Likewise the single combat between the brothers Thyamis and Petosiris for the high priesthood of Memphis reminds the reader of that between Eteokles and Polyneikes, sons of Oidipous, for the throne of Thebes.

170. At the festivals where Attic tragedy and comedy were performed the plays were ranked in order of merit by a panel of judges, and prizes were awarded accordingly.

a second drama on stage to compete with the one already in progress: by a miracle of stagecraft[171] it brought Kalasiris onto the scene on that very day, at that very hour, to join the race and, alas for him, to behold his sons fight to the death. Many ordeals had he endured, every imaginable expedient had he contrived—even to the point of sentencing himself to banishment and exile in foreign lands—in the hope of avoiding this dreadful sight. But he was no match for destiny, and he was compelled to behold that which the gods had foretold long before.

He was some way off when he first espied the chase, but, from the many prophecies he had received, he realized that the combatants must be his own sons and forced his aged body to a spurt of speed remarkable for a man of his years in the hope of forestalling their fatal conflict. Now 7
he had caught up with them and was running alongside them. "What are you doing, Thyamis and Petosiris?" he called over and over again. "What are you doing, my children?" he cried repeatedly.

But as yet they did not recognize their father, for he was still clad in his beggar's rags, while they had thought for nothing but their contest, so that they paid him no attention whatever, taking him for a vagabond or some other kind of lunatic. Some of those on the walls were impressed by the way he sought to interpose himself between two armed men with such selfless courage, but others thought he must be deranged, and laughed at such irrational exertions.

But finally the old man realized that it was his shabby appearance that was preventing his sons from recognizing him, whereupon he threw off his disguise of rags, untied his priest's mane of hair, cast aside the pack from his back and the staff from his hands, and confronted them, revealed in all his sacerdotal dignity. Then, slowly, he sank to his knees, his hands outstretched in supplication. "My children," he cried through his tears, "it is Kalasiris you see before you, none other than your own father. Run no more. Cease from this lunacy that destiny has caused in you. Your father is restored to you; honor him as you should!"

At these words their strength failed them, and they very nearly swooned. Then they both knelt before their father and clasped his knees. At first they gazed upon him hard and long to make sure they were not mistaken, but then, having assured themselves that what they saw was no illusion but reality, they experienced many contrary emotions at one and the same time: joy at the unexpected restoration of their father, sorrow and shame at the business in which he had surprised them, and finally anguish over the uncertainties of what might ensue. And before the people of Memphis could recover from their amazement, as silent as if they had been struck dumb with bewilderment, as still as figures in a

171. The *mechane* again; see note 34. Kalasiris is like a *deus ex machina*.

painting, so engrossed and moved were they by this spectacle, the drama was interrupted by another unexpected entry:[172] Charikleia! She was following hard on Kalasiris's heels and had recognized Theagenes from afar—for a lover's eyes are so quick to recognize the object of their love that often the merest movement or gesture, even if seen from a great distance or from behind, is enough to suggest an imaginary resemblance. Now, as if the sight of him had stung her to a frenzy, she threw herself upon him, flung her arms around his neck, and hung in a clinging embrace, tearfully sobbing out her greeting.

But of course the sight of her face hideously disguised with filth and of her tattered and ragged garments led him to suppose that she truly was some mendicant vagabond, and he tried to push her away and elbow her aside. But she refused to let him go and made such a nuisance of herself, blocking his view of what was happening to Kalasiris, that eventually he cuffed her round the head.

"O Pythian," she whispered, "have you forgotten the torch?" Her words pierced Theagenes' heart like an arrow, for he recognized the torch as one of the signs that they had agreed upon. He gazed hard at Charikleia and was dazzled by the brilliance of her eyes, as if by a shaft of sunlight shining out between the clouds. He took her in his arms and held her tight, with the result that all the people thronging the section of the wall where Arsake, already swelling with jealousy at the spectacle of Charikleia, had her throne were enraptured by this miracle of theatrical art.

8 So this sinful war between brothers was at an end, and the struggle, which had seemed set to be settled by the spilling of blood, changed at its denouement from tragedy to comedy. The father who had beheld his sons engaged in single combat, their swords drawn against one another, who had come within an ace of the misery of having his children die within the sight of the eyes that gave them birth, himself became the agent of peace. He had proved unable to escape destiny's ordinance, but his arrival in the nick of time to witness what had been preordained had brought him happiness. The two sons now had their father restored to them after his ten years of homeless wandering. He had been the cause of a quarrel over the priesthood for which they had been prepared to shed one another's blood, but the very next moment with their own hands they garlanded his head and crowned him with the insignia of his holy office, before escorting him into the city. But all were agreed that the high point of the drama was its romantic side, in the shape of Theagenes and Charikleia, two charming young people in the full bloom of their

172. Heliodoros here uses (or possibly misuses) an obscure technical term of the theater, *parenkyklema:* this seems to describe the use of the *ekkyklema* (see note 54) to interrupt the action taking place on stage.

youth, who against all expectation were now reunited: the eyes of the city were turned upon them more than upon any of the other participants.

The entire population came pouring out through the gates and began to pack the plain that lay before the walls. All ages were there: the youthful element of the city, those on the verge of manhood, flocked to Theagenes, while those of maturer years, fully adult males who were able to recognize him, gathered around Thyamis; the maidens of Memphis, those already dreaming of their bridal bed, clustered around Charikleia, while the whole tribe of priests and elders formed an escort for Kalasiris. Spontaneously a kind of religious procession formed. Thyamis dismissed the men of Bessa after expressing his heartfelt thanks for their zeal, with a promise that, in a few days' time, when the moon was waxing full, he would send them one hundred head of cattle, a thousand sheep, and ten drachmas for each man. Then he placed his father's arm around his neck to take the old man's weight and support him as he walked, for the joyful surprise had left him somewhat unsteady on his legs. On the other side Petosiris did likewise, and so, by the light of flaming torches, Kalasiris was conducted to the temple of Isis, while all around the crowd cheered and clapped him on his way, and massed pipes and temple flutes played a rousing tune that had the more ebullient of the young people dancing in an intoxication of high spirits.

Arsake was not to be left out of the action but paraded self-importantly in a grandiose procession of her own, made up of her private bodyguard, to the temple of Isis, where she dedicated jewelry and a vast quantity of gold, ostensibly from the same motives as the rest of the city, though in reality her eyes were fixed only on Theagenes, and none looked upon him more hungrily than she. However, her pleasure was not unalloyed, for the sight of Theagenes taking Charikleia by the arm and protecting her from the crush of the crowd stung Arsake with the sharp pain of jealousy.

On entering the shrine, Kalasiris prostrated himself and embraced the feet of the cult statue. He remained in that position for some length of time and very nearly expired there. With great difficulty, and only with the help of the bystanders, he rose to his feet and offered a libation and a prayer to the goddess. Then he took the crown of priestly office from off his own head and set it upon the head of his son Thyamis, explaining publicly that he was now well advanced in years and could foresee, moreover, that his end was at hand, while Thyamis, as the elder of his sons, was legally entitled to the insignia of the priesthood and had the spiritual and physical strength to perform the duties of that office. The 9
people showed their approval with an eruption of clamorous applause. Then Kalasiris retired to a room in the temple set aside for the high

priests, and there he remained, along with his sons and Theagenes and Charikleia.

The rest departed, each to his own home, including Arsake, though she found it hard to tear herself away and turned back many times and loitered in the temple, pretending to pay further pious homage to the goddess. But depart she eventually did, with many a backward glance at Theagenes as long as he remained in view. When she reached the royal court, she rushed straight to her chamber and hurled herself onto her bed, where she lay fully clothed in silent misery. She was a woman generally addicted to ignoble pleasure, but now her passion was fired as never before by Theagenes' peerless beauty, before which everything else in her experience paled into insignificance. All night she lay there, ceaselessly tossing from side to side, ceaselessly sighing from the depths of her being: one moment she would sit bolt upright, the next slump back on the bedclothes; she would remove part of her clothing and then suddenly collapse back on her bed, or, occasionally, summon a maidservant for no apparent reason and then send her away again without asking her to do anything.[173] In short, her desire was degenerating imperceptibly into insanity, until an old woman by the name of Kybele, one of the chambermaids who were in the habit of abetting Arsake in her love affairs, bustled into her mistress's room. Understanding perfectly what had happened—for there was a light burning in Arsake's room whose flame, as it were, shared in the fire of her love—she asked: "What is the matter, mistress? What is this new pain that makes you suffer so? Whom has my baby seen that causes her such heartache? Who could be so presumptuous or so deranged as not to capitulate before your beauty or not to consider union in love with you to be very bliss? Who dares disregard your will and pleasure? You have only to tell me, my darling child; there is no heart so hard that it is proof against my spells. You have only to tell me, and you will have your heart's desire in an instant. My past achievements have given you proof enough of my abilities, I think."

10 And while she intoned these and many other words of the same kind, Kybele fawned and whined at her mistress's feet, coaxing Arsake by every means she knew to tell her what was wrong.

After a short silence, Arsake said: "I am stricken more deeply than ever before, Mother, and though many times in the past you have served

173. Arsake's restless sleeplessness is one of the familiar symptoms of love in literature, but Heliodoros also wishes to call to mind Homer's picture of Achilles grieving sleeplessly for Patroklos (*Iliad* 24.4ff.):

> nor did sleep
> who subdues all come over him, but he tossed from one side to the other
> in longing for Patroklos....he let fall the swelling tears, lying
> sometimes along his side, sometimes on his back, and now again
> prone on his face; then he would stand upright.

me well in matters of this sort, I doubt whether this will be another of your successes on my behalf. Today before the city walls a war nearly broke out, but peace was quickly restored: as far as everyone but myself is concerned this peaceful result was achieved without a drop of blood being spilled, but for me it has become the start of a war in greater earnest, an injury not just to some limb or member of my body but to my very soul; for, alas, it gave me a sight of that young stranger who ran beside Thyamis in the duel. You must know the man I mean, Mother: his beauty was like a lightning flash, easily eclipsing all others. Even some old gaffer with no concern for things of beauty could not have failed to notice him—let alone you with your wide experience of the world. There now, my dearest, you know by what shaft I am pierced, and now you must try every device you know, all the charms and insinuations at which old woman are so adept, if you value your baby's life—for there is no way I can go on living if I do not make him mine at all costs."

"I know the young man," replied the old servant, "a broad-chested, broad-shouldered fellow, who held his head high with an extraordinary pride and stood taller than all the rest; his eyes were of the clearest blue, and his expression at one and the same time attractive and imposing. He was the one with the lovely long hair and the first growth of golden down on his cheeks. Some foreign female, quite pretty but far too forward, I felt, suddenly ran up, threw her arms around him, and clung fast in his embrace. Or is that not the man you mean, mistress?"

"That is the one, Mother" she said, "and thank you for reminding me of that disgusting spectacle, that damned little whore, with her head swollen with the idea of her own meager, vulgar charms that she got out of a jar! But all the same she is a luckier woman than I to have a lover like that."

At these words a sly smile flickered over the old woman's lips. "Take heart, mistress," she said. "Her days of seeming fair in the stranger's eyes are over. If I can induce him to turn his attention to you and your charms, he will reject that little trollop with her delusions of beauty and unfounded conceit, and, as the saying goes, will exchange bronze for gold."[174]

"If only you could, my dear old Kybele. You would cure me of two sicknesses at one stroke—love and jealousy, by satisfying the one and ridding me of the other."

174. Referring to the famous exchange of weapons between Glaukos and Diomedes in the sixth book of the *Iliad* (234–36):

> but Zeus the son of Kronos stole away the wits of Glaukos
> who exchanged with Diomedes the son of Tydeus armour
> of gold for bronze, for nine oxen's worth the worth of a hundred.

"I shall play my part," replied Kybele. "What you must do now is rest and regain your strength, keep up your spirits and not let despair exhaust your strength too soon."

11 With these words she removed the lamp and locked the bedroom door, before departing. At the first faint glimmer of dawn, she took one of the royal eunuchs and another serving maid, whom she told to follow with sacrificial cakes and certain other offerings, and hurried to the temple of Isis. At the temple door she announced that she was bringing a sacrifice to the goddess on behalf of her mistress, Arsake, who had been alarmed by certain dreams and wished to make a placatory offering to avert her vision. But one of the sacristans refused her admittance and told her to go home, since, he said, the whole sacred precinct was shrouded in sorrow. Returned home after long years of absence, Kalasiris the high priest had spent the evening partaking of an excellent dinner in the company of those he loved best, and had indulged himself to the full in the pleasures of relaxation and conviviality. At the end of the meal he had poured a libation and prayed long to the gods and then had told his sons that this would be the last time they saw their father. He had laid a solemn charge on them to make the best provision they could for the two young Greeks he had brought with him and to render them whatever assistance they could in whatever they chose to do. Then he had retired to bed. Concerned by their father's intimations of the future, his sons had kept vigil all night at his bedside, and at cockcrow the old man had been found to be dead: possibly his enormous joy had caused the muscles of his respiratory tract to become excessively dilated and flaccid consequent upon the sudden exhaustion of his aged body; or else perhaps he had prayed for death, and the gods had granted his prayer.

"We have just now dispatched messengers," he continued, "to summon hither the whole of the remaining hierarchy of Memphis to pay his body the customary respects according to ancestral tradition. Now get you gone: for seven whole days henceforward none save those ordained into the priesthood may offer any sacrifice or even set foot inside the temple."

"So what will become of those strangers you mentioned?" inquired Kybele.

"Thyamis, the new high priest," he replied, "has commanded that accommodation be provided for them nearby, outside the temple grounds. Look, here they come now, quitting the holy places for a time in obedience to the law."

Kybele seized on the opportunity offered by this turn of events and began to stalk her quarry. "Most blessed of temple servants," she said, "here is a chance for you to do a good turn for the strangers and for me too—or rather for Arsake, the sister of the Great King. You know how

she loves all things Greek and how very ready she is to open her house to strangers. Tell these young people that by order of Thyamis accommodation has been arranged for them in my lord's palace."

The sacristan did as Kybele suggested, for he suspected nothing of the schemes hatching in the darkness of her heart but supposed that he would be doing the strangers a kindness if by his agency they were received into the satrap's court, and also that he stood to earn the gratitude of those who were making this request, which seemed to cost nothing and harm no one.[175] Seeing Theagenes and Charikleia coming towards him downcast and weeping, the sacristan said: "In mourning and lamenting the passing of a high priest, despite an express warning that this was forbidden, you are transgressing our rules and contravening our traditions: rather, according to the precepts of divine and sacred lore, he should be conducted to his grave with rejoicing and blessings[176] for having entered upon a better estate and joined heaven's elect. However, you may be forgiven, for you have lost one whom you called Father, your protector and sole support. Nevertheless, you must not lose heart completely, for along with the priesthood Thyamis appears to have inherited his father's concern for your well-being. His first command was that good care be taken of you. Splendid accommodation has been arranged for you, such as might be the envy of a wealthy native of this country, to say nothing of foreigners whose present state seems less than prosperous. Go with this lady"—he pointed to Kybele—"and think of her, both of you, as your mother. She will take care of you. Do as she says."

The two lovers did as the sacristan told them, partly because they 12
were too deeply sunk in a tide of unexpected misfortune to think clearly, partly because they were happy to find shelter and refuge anywhere in their present plight. But had they had any inkling of the fatal pride that dwelt in the palace and of the harm it would cause them, they surely would never have entered it. Now the fate that presided over the tournament of their destiny had ceased its persecution for a few hours and smiled on them, but their happiness was to be short-lived, its brief day succeeded by new sorrows that destiny was already preparing. Fate was delivering them like willing captives into the hands of their foe, imprisoning, by a semblance of kindness and hospitality, two young people, strangers in a foreign land and unsuspecting of what lay in store for them. For thus it is that a life of wandering imposes on travelers sojourning in foreign parts a lack of awareness that is tantamount to blindness.

On reaching the satrapal residence, they were immediately confronted by an impressive gateway of a grandeur far exceeding that of a private

175. The Greek text is corrupt at this point; the translation gives the probable sense.

176. This is quoted word for word from a famous passage of Euripides' lost play *Kresphontes* (frag. 449 Nauck).

dwelling, lined with a magnificent array of guardsmen and teeming with a pretentious retinue of other household servants. They were filled with a mixture of awe and dismay at the sight of this palace that was in such marked contrast to their own present condition. They followed Kybele, who was at great pains to encourage and reassure them and kept calling them her darling little children and assuring them that they need have no fear concerning what awaited them. Eventually the old woman showed them to her quarters, which were in a secluded and private part of the palace. She asked the attendants to leave, and now she had Theagenes and Charikleia to herself.

She sat down beside them and said: "My children, I know the cause of the depression that oppresses you today: you are grieving for the death of the high priest Kalasiris, who was as a father to you. But I think I have a right to know who you are and where you are from. I know that you are Greek, and the evidence of my own eyes tells me that you are of noble family, for the brilliance of your eyes and an appearance that combines elegance and charm are positive proof of good breeding. But I should like very much to know what part of Greece, what city you hail from, who you are, and how your travels have brought you to Egypt. Please tell me. It will be greatly to your advantage, for then I shall be able to tell my mistress, Arsake, the sister of the Great King and wife to Oroondates, the greatest of satraps, a lover of refinement and all things Greek, and known for her kindness to strangers, all about you; and she will receive you with especial honor, as is your due. You will be telling someone who has much in common with you, for I am a Greek myself: Lesbos was my home;[177] I was taken prisoner in a war and brought here, where I am much better off than those who stayed at home. I am everything to my mistress; you might say I am the very air she breathes; I am her eyes, her mind, her ears, her all. She relies on me to introduce the right sort of people to her, and I know and keep all her most intimate secrets."

Theagenes was beginning to associate Kybele's words with Arsake's extraordinary behavior towards him the previous day. He recalled how she had stared at him with such intensity and lack of modesty, never taking her eyes off him, so that her dishonorable intentions were all too plain. He had a premonition that no good would come of all this. But just as he was on the point of replying to the old woman, Charikleia leaned over and whispered softly in his ear, "Remember your sister in whatever you say!"

13 Theagenes understood the hint. "Mother," he said, "you seem to have

177. The place is chosen for its erotic associations. It was the home of the poetess Sappho, writer of passionate love poetry; and the women of Lesbos were widely regarded as experts in oral sex, giving rise to the verb *lesbiazein*, "fellate."

discovered for yourself that we are Greeks. We are in fact brother and sister, who set off in search of our parents, who had been abducted by pirates. But our misfortunes have been even crueler than theirs, for we became the victims of men even more brutal than those pirates. We were robbed of all we had—and it was a great deal—and barely escaped with our lives. But then, through some benevolence of heaven, we met our dear, departed Kalasiris and so came to Egypt, where we hoped to spend the rest of our lives in his company. Now, as you can see, we have nothing; we are alone and forsaken, for besides everything else we have now lost the one whom we considered—indeed who was—our father. There, now you know our story. We are very grateful to you for your present kindness and hospitality, but the greatest kindness you could show us would be to arrange for us to live together far from the eyes of the world and to say no more of the kind offer you were making a few moments ago to introduce us to Arsake. She is rich and happy; we are homeless, wretched strangers in a foreign land; do not impose our sorrows on her. I am sure you understand that it is best for introductions and acquaintances to be made between people whose situations are similar."

On hearing this Kybele was unable to prevent a broad smile spreading 14
over her face, clear indication of her joy at hearing that they were brother and sister, for she envisaged that Charikleia would not pose any sort of obstacle to the affairs of Arsake's heart.

"My dear young man," she said, "you will not speak like that about Arsake when you have seen at first hand what she is like. She is not one to stand aloof, whatever your station, and, moreover, she is generous to those who, despite their merits, are less well off than she. Although she is a Persian by race, she is very much a Greek at heart and very partial to people from that country. She is fond to a fault of Greek ways and the company of Greeks. You can feel confident then that you will be treated with all the honor appropriate to a man, while your sister will be my mistress's intimate companion. What should I tell her your names are?"

They said they were called Theagenes and Charikleia. "Wait for me here," said the old woman and hurried off to Arsake, though not before giving strict instructions to the doorkeeper, another old woman, to refuse admittance to anyone wishing to enter the room and not to allow the two young people to leave.

"Not even if your son, Achaimenes,[178] turns up?" asked the doorkeeper. "Just after you set out for the temple he went out to get some ointment for his eyes—you know that they are still giving him a bit of trouble."

178. Another typically Persian name, recalling the eponymous founder of the Persian royal house.

"Not even him," replied Kybele. "Lock the door, keep the key yourself, and tell him that I have taken it with me!"

Her bidding was done. But no sooner had Kybele departed than Theagenes and Charikleia, finding themselves alone, remembered their sorrowful plight and began to weep. The words and substance of their lamentations were virtually identical. "O Theagenes!" she wailed and wailed, and each time he responded, "O Charikleia!"

"What new chance has made us its victims?" he cried, while she sobbed, "Whatever lies in store for us?" And with each thought they embraced and renewed their kisses through their tears. And finally the loss of Kalasiris came to mind and turned their lamentation into grief at his passing, particularly for Charikleia, who had known him for a longer time and benefited more from his affectionate attentions.

"O Kalasiris!" she cried mournfully. "No more may I call anyone Father, the best of names, for heaven has made it its sport at every turn to deny me the right to address anyone as my father. My natural father I have never seen; my adoptive father, Charikles, alas, I have betrayed; now I have lost the man who took me into his care, cherished me, and saved my life. And the rules of his priestly office do not even permit me to perform the usual rituals of grief over his dead body. But come now, my guardian and my savior—and I shall add the name of Father even though heaven denies it me—in such place and such manner as I may, I pour you a libation—of my own tears!—and bring you an offering—of my own tresses!"

With these words she began to tear out great handfuls of her hair. Theagenes seized her hands, restrained her, begged her to stop, but she went on with her tragic scene, saying: "What is the point of going on living? What hope do we have to guide us? Kalasiris is dead, he who led us by the hand through foreign lands, who was our rod and staff in our wanderings, our guide on our journey to the land of my birth, the key to my parents' recognition, our solace in distress, our help and salvation in perplexity, the anchor on whom our whole destiny was fastened. He is dead, and the two of us are left beset by sorrows in a strange land with no eyes to discern what we should do next. All routes by land and sea are closed to us by our lack of knowledge. That noble and kindly heart, that wise and truly venerable soul, has passed away, and even he was not allowed to see the end to which all his kindnesses were directed."

15 While she was still piteously lamenting in this vein, Theagenes both echoing her grief with sorrows of his own and at the same time choking back his tears so as to spare Charikleia further pain, along came Achaimenes, only to find the doors locked and bolted.

"What is going on?" he asked the doorkeeper, who replied that it was his mother's doing. As he was standing mystified at the door, he became

aware of Charikleia's lamentations, bent down to peer through the holes through which the chains that held the bolts were fastened, and saw what was taking place. Turning back to the doorkeeper, he asked her who the people in the room were. She replied that all she knew was that they were a young man and woman—foreigners she would guess—whom his mother had brought home with her not long before.

He bent down again and tried to identify the people he could see. Charikleia he had never seen before, though he was greatly struck by her beauty and pictured to himself what she would look like if she were not in mourning; and imperceptibly admiration led to love. Theagenes, on the other hand, he fancied was vaguely familiar, though he could not be sure.

At this point Kybele returned and caught him peering through the door. She had reported her interview with the young couple to Arsake and congratulated her warmly on the good fortune that unprompted had produced a happy result one might have despaired of ever achieving by countless ploys and stratagems: she had the object of her affections ensconced in the house, where they could meet in complete security. She had added much else of similar import, thus fanning the flames of Arsake's passion so high that Kybele had had some difficulty in checking her eagerness to see Theagenes there and then: she would not like the young man, she had said, to see her mistress now, with her face pale and eyes red from her sleepless night, but tomorrow when she had had a day's rest to restore her normal beauty. Having thus raised Arsake's spirits and made her confident of achieving her heart's desire, Kybele had instructed her on the appropriate way to behave towards her guests.

When, to resume our story, she found Achaimenes at the door, she 16
exclaimed, "What are you being so inquisitive about, my child?"

"The strangers in there," he replied. "Who are they? Where are they from?"

"You must not ask, my son," Kybele told him. "Hold your tongue. Keep your thoughts to yourself and mention this to no one. Have as little to do with our guests as possible. This is our mistress's will."

Achaimenes obeyed his mother without demur and left, surmising that Theagenes was just one more of those young men who came to minister to Arsake's sexual appetite. But as he left, he said to himself: "Is not that the man that Mitranes, the commander of guards, gave me the other day to take to Oroondates so as to be sent on to the Great King? Thyamis and the men of Bessa took him from me, and I came within an inch of losing my life—in fact, I was the only one of the escort party that managed to get away. Or are my eyes playing tricks? No, they are better now, and my vision is almost back to normal. Besides, I have heard that Thyamis turned up yesterday and was restored to the office of high priest

after fighting a duel with his brother. Yes, this is the man; I am sure of it! But for the moment I must keep it to myself that I know who he is, and wait and see what my mistress's intentions are towards the strangers."

17 Such was his soliloquy. As Kybele burst into the room, she found the traces of the young couple's sorrow still fresh; for although, as the doors banged open, they tried to compose themselves and did their utmost to feign normality of bearing and expression, they were unable to conceal their sadness from the old woman, for their eyes were still full of tears.

So Kybele exclaimed: "My darling children, why are you weeping? This is no time for tears, but rather for joy and jubilation at your good fortune. Arsake's feelings towards you are as warm as you could wish. She has agreed to grant you an audience tomorrow, and in the meantime it is her wish that you be treated with all possible attention and hospitality. But first you must stop this silly weeping. It really is childish. The time has come for you to attune yourselves to your situation and submit obediently to Arsake's bidding."

"Mother," replied Theagenes, "it was recollection of the passing of Kalasiris that made us grieve and weep for the loss of his fatherly affection."

"Stuff and nonsense!" retorted Kybele. "Kalasiris, who was your father only in your imaginations, was just an old man who has gone the way of all flesh when his years grew too many for him. Now, at a stroke, you have everything: position, wealth, luxury, indulgence in all the pleasures of youth. In short, you must realize that Arsake is the goddess of your fortune and prostrate yourself before her.[179] All you have to do is follow my instructions on how you should enter her presence and in what manner you should look upon her when she grants you an audience, how you should conduct yourself and perform whatever she asks of you. As you know, she has the imperious pride of a queen, which her youth and beauty do nothing to moderate. She will not tolerate defiance of her commands."

18 Theagenes made no reply, but in his heart he realized that Kybele's words hinted at some horrible villainy. Shortly afterward, some eunuchs came in, bearing on golden dishes what purported to be leavings from the satrap's table—but leavings of unimaginable extravagance and delicacy!

"With these gifts," they said, "our lady bids the strangers welcome and pays them her first respects." Then they set down the dishes beside the young pair and withdrew immediately. Partly in response to Ky-

179. It was customary for Persians to prostrate themselves (*proskynein*) before their rulers. The Greeks, however, reserved this gesture of respect for their gods and regarded with horror what they interpreted as divine honors being paid to a living man. Hence prostration (*proskynesis*) became in Greek eyes a symbol of the servile condition of the Persian, and refusal to perform it a proclamation of their own status as free men.

bele's urgings and partly from a prudent wish not to appear so rude as to reject Arsake's hospitality, Theagenes and Charikleia nibbled the food before them, though without appetite. The same thing happened in the evening and on each of the succeeding days.

The next morning, at about the first hour of the day, the same eunuchs came to Theagenes and said: "Sir, you are blessed among men; your presence is commanded by our lady, and we are bidden bring you to an audience. Come and enjoy the privilege that she bestows seldom and on but few."

Theagenes was silent for a moment, then rose reluctantly to his feet as if under duress. "Are your orders that only I should come," he asked, "or my sister here as well?"

They replied that only he should come; Charikleia would be granted a separate audience, but at the moment Arsake was in conference with some Persian dignitaries, and in any case it was her habit to receive men and women in separate audiences.

Theagenes leaned towards Charikleia and whispered: "I do not like this. It is very suspicious."

But when Charikleia replied that he should make no resistance but respond favorably to begin with and give the impression that he would do just as Arsake wished, he followed the eunuchs who had been sent to escort him. They explained how he should behave on being presented to 19
Arsake and how he should address her, adding that it was customary to abase oneself on entering her presence. Theagenes said not a word, but when he entered and found her enthroned on high, resplendent in a gown of purple shot with gold, flaunting the conspicuous value of her jewelry and the majesty of her crown, her bodily charms accentuated by all the means at the disposal of cosmetic art, with her bodyguard flanking the throne and her noble counselors sitting in state on either side of her, he was nothing daunted. He seemed to have forgotten the compact he had made with Charikleia to feign servility; the hollow pomp and show of Persia served merely to strengthen his indomitable spirit. He neither knelt nor abased himself, but, with his head held high, he said, "Greetings to you, Arsake, lady of the blood royal!"

The court was outraged and muttered menaces against Theagenes for his failure to prostrate himself, calling him an insolent upstart. But Arsake smiled and said: "You must forgive him. He is a stranger and does not know our ways. He is every inch a Greek and is afflicted with the scorn that all Greeks feel for us."

And with that she took off the crown from her head, despite repeated protests from her courtiers, for the Persians consider that this is a token that a greeting is returned. "Welcome, stranger," she said through her interpreter, for although she understood Greek, she could not speak it. "Tell me what you desire, and you shall have it."

Then, with a nod to her eunuchs to signify her will, she dismissed him. As the bodyguards escorted Theagenes away, Achaimenes saw him a second time, and now he was even more certain that he knew who he was. He could guess the reason why such inordinate honor was being paid Theagenes, and was lost in amazement. But still he held his tongue, in pursuance of the decision he had taken.

Arsake entertained the leading Persians to dinner, ostensibly as the customary mark of honor to them, though, truth to tell, it was her meeting with Theagenes that she was celebrating. And she sent to Theagenes and Charikleia not only their usual portion of the meal but also a number of rugs and counterpanes, handiwork of Sidon and Lydia. Besides, she sent two slaves to wait on them, a little girl for Charikleia and a little boy for Theagenes; they were both Ionian by birth, and neither had yet reached puberty. She pressed Kybele to make haste and achieve her goal as quickly as she could, for she was unable to bear her pain any longer—not that Kybele was idle; in fact she was doing her best to close the trap on Theagenes. Without ever making Arsake's intentions explicit, she tried to make Theagenes understand them by hinting at them indirectly and ambiguously. She made much of her mistress's affection for him and employed a number of plausible pretexts to allow him a glimpse not just of Arsake's readily apparent beauty but of the charms concealed beneath her clothes as well. She described Arsake's character as attractive and accessible, and recounted the pleasure her mistress derived from the company of vigorous and sophisticated young men. With every word she said she was probing to see if Theagenes had any inclination to the joys of love. He responded by echoing her praise of Arsake's generosity and love for Greece and suchlike and expressing his gratitude to her. But he deliberately ignored Kybele's efforts to lure him into immorality and pretended not even to have begun to understand them. The old woman felt as if the frustration was throttling her, and her heart went into palpitations, for she surmised that Theagenes understood her pandering well enough, and it was obvious that he was rebuffing all her efforts with insulting lack of ceremony. What is more, she was beginning to find Arsake's incessant pestering intolerable, for she kept saying she could wait no longer and demanding the satisfaction she had been promised. Kybele fobbed her off with a series of different excuses, on one occasion suggesting that the young man was ready enough but nervous of the consequences, on another inventing the story that he had fallen victim to some disorder.

20 Five or six days or so went by, during which time Arsake summoned Charikleia once or twice and, to ingratiate herself with Theagenes, received her with respect and kindness. Kybele now had no choice but to speak more plainly to Theagenes; without further dissimulation she told

him of Arsake's love and assured him that benefits beyond counting would be his if he complied.

"Why so timid? Why so frigid?" she went on. "A handsome young man like you, in the full vigor of his manhood, rejects a woman of equal attractions who is dying of love for him! He does not look upon this as an unexpected stroke of luck, his for the taking, even though there is no risk involved: her husband is away, and I, who suckled her and am privy to all her secrets, am here to abet your union. There is nothing at all standing in your way, no wife or bride-to-be here to stop you! Besides, many men have been able to overcome even that kind of inhibition, at least if they were sensible enough to recognize that this was something in which they would do no harm to their loved ones but much good to themselves by way of financial gain and sensual gratification."

She ended with a veiled threat. "Women of quality who have a fancy for young men are apt to become bitter and vindictive if they do not get their own way. They regard rejection as an insult and, reasonably enough, take reprisals. Remember too that Arsake is a Persian, by birth a lady of the blood royal (to quote your own salutation), richly endowed with wealth and power and thus able to reward devotion and punish opposition at will; whereas you are alone in a foreign land with no one to protect you. Have pity—on her as well as on yourself! She deserves your pity, for her misbehavior is the consequence of her insane infatuation with you. Take care! Beware the wrath of spurned love, the vengeance that will follow if you snub her. Many I know who have come to regret their obduracy. I have more experience than you in the affairs of Aphrodite. This grey head before you has taken part in many such contests, but I have never known anyone as callous and hard-hearted as you."

Then she turned and spoke to Charikleia, in whose hearing she had been compelled to venture this desperate plea. "My child," she said, "add your weight to my appeals to this—I am not sure what to call him!—this brother of yours. You too will profit from this business: you will have just as much affection and more honor; you will have as much money as you could wish for, and you will be able to contract a splendid marriage for yourself. These are prospects that even the prosperous might envy, let alone strangers whose present condition is one of penury."

Her eyes smoldering like coals, Charikleia shot a wry glance at Ky- 21
bele. "I should have preferred," she replied, "the excellent Arsake never to have fallen victim to such a passion: that would have been best. Failing that, the next best would have been for her to endure love's pain with self-control. However, since, according to you, she has succumbed to an all too human affliction and is a slave to her desires, I would join you in urging Theagenes here to consent to the undertaking, so long as there is no danger in it for him. But I pray that he does not do unwitting harm,

both to himself and to her, if this business ever comes to light, and somehow the satrap gets to hear of these illicit goings-on."

At this Kybele leapt to her feet, hugged Charikleia, and showered kisses on her. "Well spoken, my child!" she exclaimed. "You are right to have felt compassion for your fellow woman, and you are also right to be concerned for your brother's safety. But on that score you need have no worries. Not even the sun will know, as the saying goes."

"That is enough for the moment," said Theagenes. "Allow us some time to think it over."

Kybele left the room at once, whereupon Charikleia said: "So, Theagenes, this is the kind of good fortune that heaven vouchsafes us—good fortune in which there is more adversity than anything resembling happiness. Nevertheless, sensible people ought to make the best they can of their misfortunes. I have no idea whether you intend to carry this business through to its end; and indeed I should not blame you too much if it were the one issue on which our life or death depended. But even if, to your credit, you consider this request abhorrent, nevertheless pretend to agree to it. Feed this barbarian woman's desire with promises; play her along and so ensure that she does not turn spiteful; allay with hope the wound that festers in her heart; ease her pain with fair words. With the gods' help it is not impossible that the time you buy might bring about our deliverance. But please, Theagenes, do not allow the role you play to become the first step to shameful reality."

Theagenes smiled and replied: "Even in the most dangerous predicament you are not immune to the congenital sickness of womankind—jealousy! But let me assure you that I could not even pretend to have such intentions: to speak immoral words is just as wrong as to commit immoral acts. Besides, a point-blank rejection of Arsake will have one pleasant result at least: she will stop making such a nuisance of herself. I may be made to suffer for it, but fate and my resolve have, through many ordeals, equipped me to endure whatever may befall."

All Charikleia said in reply was, "Take care not to land us both unwittingly in great danger."

22 While Theagenes and Charikleia were engaged in these deliberations, Kybele had once more set Arsake aflutter with expectation and told her that she should be optimistic of success, for Theagenes had given some indication to that effect. Then she had returned to her quarters. She did not raise the subject again that evening, but during the night she appealed at length to Charikleia, who from the start had been sharing her room, to lend her assistance; and at daybreak she again began to ask Theagenes what he had decided. His reply was a blunt refusal that ruled any hope of his compliance out of the question. In deep gloom Kybele hurried to Arsake, who, on being told of Theagenes' obduracy, had the old woman

thrown out on her ear, then withdrew hastily into her chamber, where she lay on the bed, clawing at herself.

Kybele was barely through the door of the women's quarters when her son, Achaimenes, saw her, weeping forlornly. "What has happened, Mother?" he asked. "Nothing untoward, I hope? Nothing unpleasant? Has the mistress had some news that has upset her? Not word from the army of a reverse, I hope? I trust the Ethiopians are not getting the better of our lord Oroondates in the war he is fighting."

He maintained a barrage of such questions, but Kybele merely replied, "What drivel you talk!" and hurried away. Nothing abashed, Achaimenes ran after her, seized her by the hands, embraced her, and begged her to tell her own dear son what was making her so sad.

Taking him by the hand, she led him to a quiet corner of the garden. 23
"I would never have told anyone else," she said, "of the evils that beset my mistress and myself; but now she is quite lost in a sea of troubles, and I can foresee that my own life is in danger, for I know that Arsake's sadness and madness will not leave me unscathed. So I am left with no choice but to tell you everything in the hope that you can think of a way to help the mother who bore you, who brought you forth into the light of day and suckled you at these very breasts. Our lady is in love with the young man who is staying with us. She loves him with a love too strong to resist, a love that is not of the ordinary kind, a love that has no cure. Until today she and I were both deluded enough to believe that we could bring it to a successful consummation—hence all the various courtesies and evidences of affection that have been extended to the strangers. But that young man is such a hot headed and hard-hearted fool that he has rejected our advances, and I know for certain that now Arsake will put an end to her life and have me killed as well for having deceived and humiliated her with my promises. There you have it, my son. If there is any help you can give me, give it. Otherwise give your mother a proper burial when she is dead."

"What reward shall I get, Mother?" he asked. "I can see this is no time for me to play coy, so I must come straight to the point and not beat around the bush in offering to help, for you are almost passing out with anxiety."

"Anything you want," replied Kybele, "you may be sure of having. She has already made you head steward as a mark of her regard for me, but if you have some more exalted office in mind, tell me. Riches you would receive in quantities beyond counting if you saved our poor lady."

"I have suspected this for some time," he said, "but although I realized what was afoot, I held my tongue and bided my time to see what would transpire. I have no aspirations to office or wealth. If Arsake gives me the girl who is called Theagenes' sister to be my wife, then she shall have her

heart's desire. You see, Mother, I love that girl; I love her to distraction. The mistress will know from her own feelings what the pain is like, how severe it is, and it would be only right for her to help a fellow victim of that sickness, particularly one who is offering to accomplish as great a feat as I am."

"Do not worry," replied Kybele. "The mistress will leave no doubt as to her gratitude if you become her benefactor and savior—and besides, there might be something we could do ourselves to win the girl's assent. Tell me just how you can help."

"I shall say nothing," he replied, "until the mistress has sworn a binding oath to keep this promise to me. And don't you make any premature attempts to talk the girl round either! I can see that she is nearly as proud and haughty as her brother, and I do not want you inadvertently upsetting the whole business."

"Just as you say," said Kybele, and ran off to Arsake in her chamber. Falling at her knees, she said: "Be of good heart. Thanks be to the gods, everything is coming right. All you have to do is give word for my son, Achaimenes, to be summoned to your presence."

"Let him be summoned," said Arsake, "—unless this is another of your tricks."

24 In came Achaimenes, and after the old woman had explained how things stood, Arsake gave her solemn pledge that she would reward him with the hand of Theagenes' sister. Then Achaimenes said, "Mistress, Theagenes is your slave, and I think he should stop playing hard to get with his own mistress!"

"What do you mean?" asked Arsake, whereupon Achaimenes told her the whole story: how Theagenes was captured and made a prisoner, as men are in war; how Mitranes sent him to Oroondates in order for him to be sent on to the Great King; how he himself was given charge of the prisoner to take him to the satrap but lost him when Thyamis and the men of Bessa mounted a daring assault; how he had barely escaped with his life. As final proof he showed Arsake Mitranes' letter to Oroondates, which he had had the foresight to bring with him, and added that if she required further proof, Thyamis would corroborate what he said.

At these words, Arsake began to revive. Without pausing even for a moment, she hurried out of her chamber to the hall where it was her custom to sit in state and grant audiences. There she commanded that Theagenes be brought before her. On his arrival, she pointed to Achaimenes, who was standing at her side, and asked Theagenes whether he recognized him. He said he did. A second question followed. "Were you not taken prisoner, and were you not being brought here under his supervision?"

Theagenes again had to admit that this was true.

"Then know that you are my slave! You will perform the duties of a household servant and obey my every nod, much though it galls you. Your sister I betroth in marriage to Achaimenes here, whom we hold in the highest esteem, both for his mother's sake and for his general devotion towards us. The marriage will take place just as soon as a date can be fixed and preparations made for an exceptionally magnificent celebration."

These words had wounded Theagenes to the heart, but nevertheless he decided not to cross swords with Arsake but to sidestep her onslaught like that of a wild animal.

"My lady," he said, "thanks be to the gods that people of such high nobility as ourselves have at least had the good fortune to find in the midst of adversity the consolation of being slaves to none but you, who looked upon us with such gentleness and kindness even when we appeared to be mere strangers and no concern of yours. As regards my sister, who is not a prisoner of war, and therefore not your slave, but chooses of her own free will to serve you and to accept whatever status you may be pleased to grant her, act howsoever, after due consideration, you deem correct."

"He shall be assigned to wait at table," said Arsake. "Achaimenes shall teach him to pour wine. So, even in this outpost of the empire, he shall become accustomed to the king's service."

And so they left the room, Theagenes frowning pensively as he wondered what to do now, Achaimenes gloating and taunting Theagenes. "Well now, our fine, proud, swaggering fellow of an hour ago;[180] our lone, stiff-necked champion of liberty, who refused to bow his head in veneration, perhaps now you will bow it—or else you will feel my knuckles on it to teach you the art!"

Arsake dismissed all her attendants except Kybele. "So now, Kybele," she said, "there will be no more excuses! Go to our haughty friend and tell him that if he obeys me and behaves as I wish, he will enjoy a measure of freedom and live a life of ease and plenty. But if he persists in the contrary course, he will incur the combined wrath of a lover slighted and a mistress displeased, and find himself reduced to a condition of the most abject and contemptible servitude and subjected to punishments of every imaginable variety."

Kybele went and told him what Arsake had said, with many embellishments of her own such as she thought might be helpful in persuading him to submit. Theagenes asked her to allow him a moment's grace, and, taking Charikleia to one side, he whispered: "We are done for, Charikleia! Our mooring ropes have all snapped, as the saying goes; the

180. A quotation from Menandros's play *Perikeiromene* (172 Sandbach).

anchors on which our hopes were fastened have all been torn irretrievably loose. We may not even face our misfortunes with the status of free persons; we have been made slaves again"—and here he explained how this had come about—"and now we are the defenseless prey of barbarian cruelty and must either submit to our masters' whims or else account ourselves gallows' meat. Even this I could endure, but the heaviest burden to bear is that Arsake has pledged to give you to Kybele's son, Achaimenes, to be his wife. This will not happen, or if it does, I shall not be alive to see it—that much is beyond doubt, so long as life permits me access to a sword and a way of escape. What can we do? What plan can we devise to frustrate these abhorrent unions between Arsake and me and Achaimenes and you?"

"One only," replied Charikleia. "By consenting to the one you will be able to prevent mine."

"You must not speak like that!" he answered. "May the god who has us in his power never be so cruel that I, who have never known Charikleia, am compelled to defile myself in illicit intimacy with another woman! But I think I have an idea that may work. Necessity is the mother of invention!"

And so saying, he returned to Kybele and said, "Tell milady that I should like a word with her alone and in private."

26 Imagining that Theagenes had, at long last, submitted, the old woman took the news to Arsake, who told her to bring the young man to her after dinner. Kybele did so, and, after giving strict instructions to Arsake's entourage not to disturb their mistress or do anything to incommode the occupants of her chamber, she ushered in Theagenes. The palace was shrouded in the darkness of night; the only light burning was the one in Arsake's chamber: thus the deed was done unobserved. Having let Theagenes into the room, Kybele made to withdraw, but he held her back and said: "I should like Kybele to stay for a moment, my lady. I know that you trust her to keep all your secrets."

So saying, he took Arsake's hands in his and went on. "My lady, it is not from stubborn defiance of your will that I have until now been reluctant to do as you ask; rather I was trying to procure its accomplishment without risk. But now since fate has made me your slave—which perhaps is for the best—I feel far fewer qualms about doing whatever you wish of me. You have promised me many and great rewards, but consent to grant me one thing only: cancel the marriage between Achaimenes and Charikleia. For, to say nothing of all the other considerations, it would be quite wrong for a woman who takes such pride in the high nobility of her birth to become the wife of one born and bred to slavehood. If you refuse me this, I swear to you by the gods, and in particular by the Sun, the fairest of them all, that I shall never comply with your wishes

and that if force is used against Charikleia, you will see me dead by my own hand before I submit to you."

"Please believe me," replied Arsake, "I am ready to give you anything you desire, just as I am willing to give you myself. But I am bound by a previous oath to give Achaimenes your sister in marriage."

"Good, my lady!" exclaimed Theagenes. "Give him my sister, whoever she may be, but I am sure you will not choose to give him my betrothed, my bride, one who must be accounted my wedded wife—nor will you do so even if you so choose."

"What are you saying?" she asked.

"No more than the truth," he answered. "Charikleia is no sister to me, but my bride, as I said. So your oath is no longer binding. If you want conclusive proof, you can get it by celebrating my marriage to her whenever it so pleases you."

Arsake felt a pang of jealousy on hearing that Charikleia was not his sister but his bride, but nevertheless she said: "So be it. We shall find Achaimenes another match to console him."

"And now that that is settled," said Theagenes, "I shall make good my side of the bargain."

And with these words he took a step forward to kiss her hands. But Arsake leaned forwards and, offering him her lips rather than her hands, kissed him. So Theagenes departed, the recipient and not the bestower of a kiss. As soon as he had the opportunity, he told Charikleia everything, although some parts of his story aroused jealousy in her as well. He went on to explain his purpose in making such an immoral promise: the single act served many aims.

"Achaimenes' plan to marry you has been confounded, and a pretext has been established to keep Arsake's desires waiting for a while. And, most important, we can now expect Achaimenes to throw the whole situation into confusion, both from vexation at the frustration of his hopes and from anger that Arsake's favor towards me has so diminished his own standing with her. He is certain to hear every detail, for a full account will be given him by his mother, whose presence at our interview I engineered for precisely this purpose: I wanted my confidences to be betrayed to Achaimenes, and I was also ensuring that I had a witness that my intercourse with Arsake was purely verbal. It may be enough to keep one's conscience clear and pin one's hopes on the benevolence of heaven, but it is right too to demonstrate one's innocence to the people among whom one lives, and so pass one's brief sojourn in this world in candid honesty."

He went on to say that there was every likelihood that Achaimenes would go so far as to form hostile designs against Arsake: he was a man born to slavery (and a man subject to a master tends to hate the master to

whom he is subject); a man wronged, a solemn pledge to whom had been set at nought; a man in love who had discovered that another had been preferred to himself; a man with intimate knowledge of the most illicit and immoral goings-on, who had no need to invent falsehoods with which to attack Arsake (as on many occasions men have been emboldened by their grievances to do) but had only to reveal the truth to exact his vengeance.

27 By elaborating on this theme at some length, he imparted some measure of confidence to Charikleia. The next day Achaimenes took him to wait at table, as Arsake had commanded. He changed into the sumptuous Persian apparel she had sent him and, with a mixture of delight and disgust, bedecked himself with bangles of gold and collars studded with precious gems. Achaimenes then tried to demonstrate and explain to him something of the art of cup bearing, but Theagenes ran to one of the tripods on which the cups stood, picked up one of the precious vessels, and exclaimed: "I have no need of teachers! I shall use my instinct in serving my mistress and not erect a mystique around something so simple. It is your lot in life, my friend, to know how to do such things, but in my case natural ability and the requirements of the moment tell me what is to be done."

With these words he mixed a delicious draught and conveyed the bowl to Arsake, balancing it with exquisite grace in his fingertips. The drink raised her to new heights of Dionysiac ecstasy. As she quaffed the cup, she kept her eyes fixed steadily on Theagenes; and she drank deeper of the cup of love than of the wine. She made a point of not draining the bowl dry but leaving a little wine in the bottom, as an ingenious way of drinking Theagenes' health.[181]

Achaimenes, for his part, had suffered a wound of a different kind. The rage and envy that filled his heart were so obvious that even Arsake noticed him scowling and muttering something under his breath to his companions.

At the end of the banquet Theagenes said, "The first favor I crave, my lady, is this: command me to wear these clothes only when I am waiting on you."

Arsake nodded her assent, and, changing into his normal clothes, he left. Achaimenes left with him, berating Theagenes at length for his forwardness and saying that his casual manner was pure childishness; although to begin with the mistress might overlook the behavior of a newcomer who did not know the ways of the court, he would not go unpunished if he persisted in such self-opinionated insolence; he was giv-

181. Normally one would drink from a bowl and then pass it, with words of friendship, to the other person for him to drink from too. By leaving some wine in the bottom of her cup, which is then taken away by Theagenes, Arsake is able to perform her side of the toast ritual.

ing him this advice as a friend—or, rather, as one who was shortly to become his kinsman, for their mistress had promised him that he could marry Theagenes' sister. Achaimenes continued in this vein at great length, but Theagenes had the appearance of not listening to a word he said, walking beside him with his eyes fixed on the ground, until they ran into Kybele, who was on her way to put her mistress to bed for her siesta. Noticing the sour expression on her son's face, she inquired what the reason for it was.

"That young foreign whippersnapper," he replied, "is held in greater esteem than we are. He has only been here a couple of days, and he is allowed to pour wine at table. Then he bids us, the headwaiters and chief butlers, good day, hands milady a bowl, and stands next to the royal person, without so much as a by-your-leave to us and our superior rank—so called! That this fellow should be promoted above our heads and made intimate to our lady's inmost secrets through our own mistaken silence and connivance is the least of our misfortunes, bad though it is. But it might at least have been possible for this to be done without humiliating and insulting those of us who have aided and served her in all her honest dealings.

"We must talk about this again later, but at the moment, Mother, I 28
should like to see my betrothed, my dearest darling Charikleia, in the hope that in the sight of her I can find a cure for the hurt that has stung my soul."

"What betrothed, my child?" replied Kybele. "It seems to me that what vexes you is the least of your grievances; of the greater ones you appear blissfully unaware. You are no longer engaged to marry Charikleia!"

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Am I not worthy to marry my own fellow slave? What is the reason, Mother?"

"We ourselves are to blame," she replied. "We and our loyal service to Arsake in an unlawful cause. We esteemed her above our own safety; we thought her lust more important than our own lives; we served her pleasure devotedly; and the result is that this noble fellow, this wonderful lover of hers, has had to worm his way into her chamber just once for the mere sight of him to induce her to break all the oaths she swore you and to pledge Charikleia to him, because now he claims that she is not his sister but his bride-to-be."

"Has Arsake really made that promise, Mother?"

"She has, my child," replied Kybele. "I was there, and I heard her. She is going to hold a splendid celebration to mark their wedding in a few days' time, and she has undertaken to find you a different wife."

Hearing this, Achaimenes groaned in despair and wrung his hands. "I shall make sure that they all find that this wedding has a bitter taste," he said. "The only help I ask of you is that you arrange for the wedding to

be postponed for as long as need be. And if anyone asks after me, tell him I am somewhere in the country, laid up after a fall. Our fine friend calls his sister his bride-to-be! As if we were too stupid to realize that this is a tale made up simply to thwart me! If he were to take her in his arms and kiss her as other men do, or, better still, were to share her bed, that would be proof positive that she is not his sister but his bride-to-be! I shall see to this, with the help of the oaths she has transgressed and the gods she has disregarded."

29 So he spoke. Anger, jealousy, love, and disappointment combined to goad him to fury: emotions capable of turning anyone's mind, let alone a savage's. An idea formed in his mind, and he decided immediately to act on it, without any rational consideration of the consequences. That evening he managed to make off with one of the Armenian horses that were kept in the satrap's stables for ceremonial purposes, and rode away to find Oroondates, who at that time was in Great Thebes, mustering an expeditionary force against the Ethiopians, collecting material for every conceivable kind of fighting and troops of all descriptions; even now he was making ready to march out against the foe.

Book Eight

1 The king of Ethiopia had succeeded in outwitting Oroondates and had seized one of the prizes for which the war was being fought by mounting a preemptive strike to take possession of the city of Philai, a perennial object of dispute. In so doing, he had reduced the satrap to impotence and left him no alternative but to dispatch an expedition at short notice and, for the most part, with no prior organization. The city of Philai lies on the river Nile,[182] a little above the Lesser Cataracts, some twelve miles from Syene and Elephantine. It was once occupied and settled by Egyptian exiles, who thus rendered it a bone of contention between the Ethiopians and the Egyptians, for the former maintain that the boundary of Ethiopia lies at the cataract, whereas the Egyptians claim that the city is rightfully theirs on the grounds that its original occupation by refugees from Egypt constituted an act of conquest.[183] The city has changed hands continually, belonging to whichever of the two sides has been able to make themselves masters of the place by preempting the other. At the period in question it was manned by a garrison of Egyptians and Per-

182. Philai is actually an island in the Nile.

183. This historical sketch is largely fiction. Strabo (17.1.49) suggests that the place was settled jointly by Egyptians and Ethiopians, while Ailios Aristeides tells us that Ethiopian soldiers were stationed there in the second century. The Egyptian exiles are presumably to be identified with the "Deserters" mentioned by Herodotos (2.30) and others, although the area they were supposed to have settled lay much further to the south.

sians, but the king of Ethiopia was demanding the return both of Philai and of the emerald mines (which had been the subject of unsuccessful representations by him some years previously, as has already been related) and had sent a deputation to Oroondates. He allowed his emissaries a few days' start, then set off after them. He had made his preparations well in advance, under the guise of some quite different campaign, and had not revealed the objective of his expedition to anyone. When he calculated that the delegation would have passed Philai and put its inhabitants and garrison off their guard with its pronouncements that its mission was to seek peace and possibly even friendship, he suddenly attacked the city in person and expelled the garrison, which held out for some two or three days but was eventually overcome by the sheer weight of the enemy's numbers and his siege engines. Thus he gained possession of the city without harming a single one of its inhabitants.

It was in the state of confusion caused by these events that Achaimenes found Oroondates, who had learned exactly what had happened from those who had managed to escape. Achaimenes' unexpected and unbidden arrival only heightened the satrap's alarm: he asked whether something untoward had occurred concerning Arsake or the rest of his household. Achaimenes replied that it had, and asked to speak to him in private. As soon as they were alone, Achaimenes told him everything: how Theagenes had been taken captive by Mitranes and sent to Oroondates for him to send on as a gift to the Great King, if he thought fit—and indeed the young man was of a quality fit for the royal court and table; how the men of Bessa had snatched him away, killing Mitranes in the process; how subsequently he had come to Memphis (at which point Achaimenes digressed to relate events concerning Thyamis). Finally, he told of Arsake's infatuation with Theagenes and how Theagenes had been brought to live in the palace, the attentions that had been lavished on him, and the episode of his waiting at table and pouring the wine; maybe nothing illicit had occurred as yet, for the young man had so far proved stubborn and recalcitrant, but there was a distinct possibility of its occurring if the stranger were subjected to duress, or the passage of time in some way weakened his resolve—unless immediate steps were taken to remove him from Memphis before it was too late and thus to deprive Arsake's infatuation of all its substance. This was why he had stolen away and come in such haste to bring word to Oroondates: his devotion to his master was such as to compel him to speak out about the wrongs being done to his master.

Achaimenes' story filled Oroondates' heart with rage; he was consumed with anger and thoughts of vengeance. But then Achaimenes went on to tell him about Charikleia and lit new fires, fires of passion, in the satrap's breast. He sang her praises loudly (though he said nothing 2

unmerited by the reality); he did his best to convey the divine glory of her beauty and grace: her like had never been seen before and could never occur again.

"You must imagine that all your concubines are as nothing to her—not only the ones you left in Memphis but even those that have come on campaign with you," he said and added much more in the same vein, hoping that if Oroondates bedded Charikleia, it would not be long thereafter before he could request her hand as the reward for his information, and so make her his own wife.

By now the satrap's whole being was aroused; he was aflame, enmeshed in the twin nets of rage and desire. There and then he summoned Bagoas, one of his trusted eunuchs,[184] gave him command of fifty horsemen, and dispatched him to Memphis with orders to bring Theagenes and Charikleia to him as quickly as possible, in whatever place he was to
3 be found. He also handed him two letters. One was to Arsake and read as follows.

> Oroondates to Arsake. Send me Theagenes and Charikleia, the brother and sister who were taken captive and are now slaves of the Great King; I shall send them on to the king. Send them to me of your own free will; if you refuse, they shall be brought to me all the same, and Achaimenes' allegations will be confirmed.

The second was to Euphrates, the head eunuch at Memphis.

> As regards your negligence over my household, you will have to account to me. For the moment deliver to Bagoas the Greek strangers who are prisoners of war so that they may be conveyed to me, whether Arsake consents or not. Be sure to deliver them to him; otherwise, know that I have given orders for you to be put in chains and flayed alive.

The satrap sealed these letters with his own seal so that the people in Memphis should have proof of their authority and release the young couple instantly. Then Bagoas and his party departed to execute their master's bidding. Oroondates departed also, for the war against the Ethiopians. He commanded Achaimenes to go with him and had him watched discreetly, without his knowledge, until he could prove the veracity of his information.

During these same days at Memphis the following events took place. Soon after Achaimenes' disappearance, Thyamis, who was now securely reinstated as high priest and was thus a person of some consequence in

184. This name was borne by several historical Persian eunuchs; according to Pliny (*Natural History* 13.41) the word actually meant "eunuch." It became a typical eunuch's name in literature.

the city, having performed the rites of Kalasiris's funeral and paid his father all the traditional respects for the prescribed number of days, began to give some attention to the question of finding Theagenes and his companion, now that the rules of his office permitted him to have contact with people outside the temple. After exhaustive inquiries, he discovered that they had become residents of the satrapal palace, and he hurried immediately to Arsake to demand the return of the young strangers, with whom he said he had many ties, in particular the fact that the last words of his father, Kalasiris, had been to charge him to protect and provide for the strangers to the best of his ability. He acknowledged his gratitude to her for showing such kindness to the young pair, Greeks in a foreign land as they were, and taking them into her house during the days since his father's death when it was forbidden for the unconsecrated to dwell within the temple; but at the same time he demanded as his right the return of those who had been placed in his care.

"I find it beyond belief," replied Arsake, "that with one breath you can testify to our generosity and humanity and with the next accuse us of inhumanity in suggesting that we are likely to be unable or unwilling to provide for the strangers and treat them as is their due."

"That is not what I meant," said Thyamis. "I am quite well aware that their life would be much more comfortable here than with me, should they choose to stay here. However, they are members of a noble family who have been subjected to every kind of indignity that fortune can inflict and are now destitute and homeless; their one desire is to be reunited with their family and return to the land of their birth. My father has bequeathed me the responsibility of assisting them in this, though the strangers have other claims besides on my friendship."

"I am glad," replied Arsake, "that you are no longer casting aspersions and now rest your case on equity. In fact, though, equity is clearly on my side, inasmuch as ownership is a stronger claim to possession than mere concern."

Thyamis was taken aback. "How do you own these people?" he asked.

"By the rules of war," she replied, "according to which captives taken in war become slaves."

Thyamis recognized this as a reference to the incident concerning Mi- 4
tranes. "But Arsake," he said, "this is a time not of war but of peace. And while it is in the nature of war to make slaves, it is in the nature of peace to set them free; the former act is a tyrant's whim; the latter shows the judgment of a true king. The true distinction between peace and war resides less in the inherent meaning of the words than in the deportment of the agents concerned. Your interpretation of equity would seem stronger if you accepted this principle. Concerning propriety and expedi-

ency, on the other hand, there is no question: how can it possibly be right or in your interests for you to demonstrate and profess such a passionate attachment to young foreigners?"

5 Arsake could contain herself no longer. Her reaction was one typical of lovers: as long as they think that no one knows of their love, they blush with guilt, but as soon as they are found out, they lose all sense of shame: the lover undiscovered lacking boldness, the lover detected having rather too much. So it was with Arsake: her guilty conscience led her to betray her guilt. She assumed that Thyamis had guessed something of her predicament and, with no respect for the high priest or the dignity of his priestly office and no thought for the modesty proper in a woman, she exclaimed: "You will pay for what you did to Mitranes, too. One day Oroondates will bring to book those who murdered him and his men. I will *not* release them! For the moment they are my slaves, and soon they will be sent up to my brother, the Great King, as the law of Persia requires. You can make all the fine speeches you like, with your meaningless definitions of equity, propriety, and expediency. He who holds absolute power needs none of these things: his will serves for them all. Now get out of our palace at once! Go of your own accord, otherwise you may find yourself being forcibly ejected."

So Thyamis left, but not before calling the gods to witness; he confined himself to declaring that she would regret her behavior, for he was resolved to inform the city of what had happened and call upon the assistance of the people.

"I do not give a damn for your holy orders!" exclaimed Arsake. "The only holy order that love knows is its consummation!"

And with that she withdrew to her chamber and, summoning Kybele, fell to reflecting upon her situation. She had already begun to feel vaguely apprehensive that Achaimenes, who was nowhere to be seen, had run away, but whenever she raised the subject and asked where Achaimenes was, Kybele would invent a whole succession of various excuses, trying to induce her to believe anything rather than that he had gone to Oroondates; but ultimately she did not quite convince her mistress, who began to doubt her word as the days went by.

So now she said: "What are we to do, Kybele? How can I escape from my predicament? Far from abating, my love is more intense than ever, and the young man is like fuel to its raging fire. He is cruel and hard-hearted, and he showed more humanity at the beginning than he does now: then at least he afforded me the comfort of false promises, but now he rejects my suit utterly and unambiguously—which disturbs me the more because I am afraid he may have got wind of what I suspect myself concerning Achaimenes, and so have even less stomach for the performance of the deed. Achaimenes is the biggest worry of all. He has gone

to inform Oroondates, has he not? What he says may be believed, or at least not seem beyond belief. If only I could see Oroondates! One caress, one tear from his darling Arsake, would finish him! The eyes of a woman, of a wife, possess a powerful magic of persuasion against her husband. What a cruel twist it would be if I were accused of having my way with Theagenes before I could actually do so—or if, as it may be, I were punished for it, as might happen if Oroondates were convinced of my guilt before he saw me. So, Kybele, leave no stone unturned; try everything you know, for you can see that my situation is critical, poised on a razor's edge. Remember too that if I despair of my own life, there will, of course, be no possibility of my sparing others. You will be the first to enjoy the fruits of your son's schemes. In fact I cannot understand how you were not aware of them."

"You are quite wrong about my son and about my own devotion to you, my lady," replied Kybele, "as events will show you. When your own approach to your love is so supine, when you really are behaving like a woman, you must not try to throw the responsibility onto others who are not to blame. You are not acting like a mistress with power to make the young man do her will; you treat him with as much consideration as if *you* were *his* slave. That may have been the right thing to do at the beginning when we thought he was a dainty fellow whose spirit could easily be broken. But since he is unresponsive when you play the lover, let him learn what you can be like as a mistress; let whip and rack make him submit to your will. It is in the nature of young men to react arrogantly to kindness but to yield to compulsion. That is how it will be with him: punishment will succeed where blandishment failed."

"That is good advice, I think," said Arsake. "But in god's name, how could I bear to watch with my own eyes that beautiful body being flogged or punished in any way at all?"

"You are playing the woman again," replied Kybele. "Can you not understand that a few lashes will be enough to bring him to his senses, and that after a moment's distress you will have your heart's desire? You need not even pain your eyes with the sight: you can hand him over to Euphrates and tell him to punish him for some misdemeanor, and so spare yourself the distress of watching the punishment being done—hearing about something causes less pain than seeing it; then, if we hear that he has had a change of heart, you can say that he has been reprimanded sufficiently and have him released."

This was enough to convince Arsake, for a love that has been 6
thwarted in its hopes shows no mercy to its beloved, and failure very often turns to a wish for revenge. She sent for her chief eunuch and gave him her orders. Temperamentally afflicted with jealousy (as eunuchs are), he had long nursed a smoldering hatred of Theagenes as a result of

what he had seen and conjectured. He immediately loaded him with iron chains and locked him up in a dark cell, where he made him suffer the pains of starvation and torture. Theagenes knew why he was being treated like this, but pretended not to and pointedly asked the reason; but the eunuch answered never a word. He daily increased the severity of the punishment, exacting a retribution harsher than Arsake desired or had commanded, and allowed no one to visit his prisoner, with the single exception of Kybele, in whose case he had received specific instructions. She paid continual visits, on the pretense of smuggling food in to Theagenes. She affected compassion and a sympathy born of their former intimacy, but, in fact, she had come to gauge his reaction to his present condition and see whether the rack had brought about any submission or softening of his resolve. But on the contrary he was more of a man than ever and rebuffed her advances with redoubled firmness. Though his body was in torment, his spirit had the strength of virtue, and he refused to bow his head to fortune, proclaiming proudly that despite her hostility in all else she had shown him kindness in the one thing that mattered by presenting him with an opportunity to display his love and devotion to Charikleia; he counted it the supreme happiness if only she knew of his ordeals, and never ceased from calling Charikleia his life, his light, his soul.

Seeing this, Kybele, despite being told by Arsake that she wanted Theagenes' suffering to be slight, as the purpose of her sentence had been to apply pressure to him, not to kill him, told Euphrates on the contrary to increase the severity of the punishment. But it was soon apparent to her that this was to no avail and that this approach too had ended in disappointment and failure. She realized that her position was desperate: on the one hand she could expect imminent retribution from Oroondates, should he hear from Achaimenes what was going on; on the other, Arsake might well destroy her before he could, on the grounds that her assistance to her mistress in her love had succeeded only in making a fool of her. So she decided to bring the crisis to a head and by the perpetration of one great crime either bring Arsake's desires to a successful consummation and so avert for the moment the threat posed by her mistress, or else destroy the evidence for the whole affair by contriving the deaths of all the participants at one fell swoop.

So she went to Arsake and said: "Our efforts are all in vain, my lady. He has a heart of stone and will not give in. His insolence grows day by day. Charikleia's name is forever on his lips, and he seems to derive comfort and healing merely from speaking it. If you agree then, let us use our anchor of last resort,[185] as the saying goes: she is in our way, so

185. A Greek ship would carry several anchors, the last of which would be employed only when all the others had failed. Hence a proverbial expression denoting a final, desperate fling on which all hopes were pinned.

we must remove her. If he hears that she is dead, it is quite likely that he will have a change of heart and fall in with our wishes, once he realizes that his love for her is hopeless."

Arsake pounced on these words. The jealousy she had long felt to- 7
wards Charikleia was now augmented by her rage at what she had just heard. "You are right!" she exclaimed. "I shall make it my business to give orders for the accursed creature to be killed."

"And who will obey those orders?" replied Kybele. "You may hold absolute power, but the laws forbid the taking of life unless sentence has been passed by the Persian judiciary. So you will be obliged to invent some charge or other to bring against the girl, which will be a bothersome and unpleasant business—and, what is more, there is no guarantee that our accusations will be believed. I have a better idea: I am prepared to do anything for you, whatever the cost. With your permission, I shall use poison to carry this scheme through for you and eliminate our adversary with a witch's potion."

Arsake agreed and told her to proceed. Kybele lost no time. When she came to Charikleia, she found her weeping and lamenting, mourning, in fact, as for one dead, and considering how to put an end to her own life, for by now she was aware of Theagenes' fate, although all along Kybele had done all she could to throw her off the scent and had invented a whole series of explanations for his disappearance and failure to pay his usual visits to her room.

"My poor child," she said, "please stop this. You are worrying yourself to death for no reason. See now, Theagenes has been released. He will be here this evening. He offended the mistress in some way while waiting at table, and in a moment of anger she ordered him to be locked up. But today she has promised to release him, for she is about to celebrate some traditional feast day; besides, my appeals have won her round. On your feet then, and break your fast by having something to eat with me now."

"Why should I believe you?" asked Charikleia. "Your never-ending lying makes me doubt every word you utter."

"By all the gods," replied Kybele, "I swear to you that this day will see the end of all your misfortunes and your deliverance from all anxiety—just so long as you do not starve yourself to death first. It is days since you have eaten; let me persuade you to take a mouthful of this food that has arrived from the kitchens so opportunely."

Charikleia consented only with reluctance, but consent she did. Although she had grown used to suspecting treachery, the oaths had gone some way to winning her trust, and she was only too happy to believe such pleasant promises, for the heart is prone to believe in that for which it craves. So, taking their places at table, they began to eat. One of Arsake's favorite slaves was waiting on them, and when she offered them

cups of wine mixed with water, Kybele motioned to her to serve Charikleia first, then took the second cup herself and started to drink. But before she could drink it dry, it became plain that the old woman's head was swimming. She dashed the last few drops of her wine to the ground and glared ferociously at the maid; then a fit of the most violent convulsions and paroxysms racked her body.

8 Charikleia was astounded and attempted to revive her; the rest of the company was astounded too. The poison, so it seemed, was more deadly than any arrow dipped in death-dealing venom, and powerful enough to dispatch a young person in the prime of his strength; and thus now its effect on a body that age had reduced to mere skin and bones was even more drastic. The poison reached her vitals more quickly than it takes to tell. The old woman's eyes bulged, and, as the convulsions ceased, her limbs became paralyzed and rigid, and her skin took on a blackish hue. But the treachery in her heart was, I think, more vicious than any lethal drug, for, even in her death throes, Kybele did not forget her evil tricks: with a combination of gestures and gasped words she indicated that Charikleia was her murderer.

Even as the old woman was breathing her last, Charikleia was manacled and brought immediately before Arsake, who demanded to know whether she had brewed the poison herself, and threatened her with punishment and torture if she refused to confess the truth. Then Charikleia presented an extraordinary sight to those who were there to see her: with no sign of despondency or cowardice, she clearly viewed her predicament as a matter for derision, partly because a clear conscience allowed her to feel nothing but contempt for such a false accusation, partly from joy at the prospect of being united in death with Theagenes, with the added benefit of being spared the pollution of bloodshed if others did to her what she had already determined to do to herself.

"Your Excellency," she said, "if Theagenes is alive, then I too am innocent of murder; but if anything untoward has happened to him as a result of your pious counsels, then you have no need to torture a confession out of me. I confess that it was I who poisoned the woman who nursed you and educated you to such virtue. Kill me without more ado: that would be the dearest wish of Theagenes, who so morally scorned your immoral counsels."

9 In furious rage at Charikleia's words, Arsake gave orders for her to be soundly beaten, then said: "Take the accursed creature down to the cells. Leave her chains on her. Let her see that wonderful sweetheart of hers receiving the same treatment as herself—as he so richly deserves. Shackle her hand and foot and give her too to Euphrates to keep under guard until tomorrow, when the Persian magistrates will sentence her to pay with her life for what she has done."

But as she was being led away, the young slave who had served the wine to Kybele (she was one of the two Ionians whom Arsake had presented to wait on the young couple when they first arrived in the palace) burst into tears, possibly touched by an affection for Charikleia that sprang from the shared intimacy of daily life, or possibly even enacting the will of heaven. "The poor thing!" she sobbed. "She is quite innocent!"

Puzzled by her words, the assembled company wrung from her an explanation of what precisely she meant. She confessed to having given the poison to Kybele, who had herself given it to her to give to Charikleia; but, before she could do so, possibly because she was flustered by the enormity of the crime or else because Kybele's gesture to serve Charikleia first had muddled her, she had switched the cups and presented the old woman with the one with poison in it. She was taken straight to Arsake, for they all considered this evidence of Charikleia's innocence a remarkable stroke of luck: compassion for a noble heart and a fair countenance can be felt even by a race of barbarians. But the only result of the maidservant repeating her story was for Arsake to say, "This person appears to be an accomplice," and command that she should be put in chains and held under guard to await the trial. She then sent word to the Persian lords in whom power was vested to discuss matters of state, to pronounce judgements and decide sentences, summoning them to hear the case the following day.

The judges arrived at daybreak and took their seats on the bench. Arsake conducted the prosecution, omitting no detail of fact in her account of the poisoning. Throughout the proceedings she wept for her erstwhile nurse and the loss of one more devoted to her and more esteemed by her than any other, and called upon the judges to verify that this was the way her kindness in welcoming a stranger into her house and lavishing affection on her had been reciprocated. In short, she mounted a damning case for the prosecution. In defense Charikleia said nothing: she repeated her admission of guilt and made no attempt to contest the charge of poisoning, adding among other things that she would gladly have done away with Arsake also, had she not been prevented. She abused Arsake forthrightly and did all she could to provoke the judges into condemning her. This was because the previous night in her prison cell, after telling Theagenes all that had happened and hearing in turn of his ordeals, she had made a compact with him to accept voluntarily any death that might be inflicted on them, and so be rid forever of a life without hope, an exile without end, and a fate without pity. For what she thought would be the last time she had embraced him. She always took care to have the necklaces that had been exposed with her concealed about her person, but today she wore them as a kind of burial shroud, fastened around her waist

beneath her clothes. None of the charges brought against her did she contest, and where no charge was brought she invented one.

Her judges had no hesitation; they very nearly sentenced her to the excessive cruelty of a Persian execution, but, touched perhaps by the sight of her youth and peerless beauty, they condemned her instead to be burned at the stake. At once she was seized by the executioners and taken to a place just outside the city wall. All this time a crier was proclaiming that she was being led to the stake as a poisoner, and a large crowd of other people from the city had joined the procession: some had actually seen her being led away, others had heard the story that raced through the town, and had hurried to watch. Arsake was there too, watching from the wall, for she would have been most disappointed not to feast her eyes on the sight of Charikleia's punishment.

The executioners built a gigantic bonfire and then lit it. As the flames took hold, Charikleia begged a moment's grace from the guards who held her, promising that she would mount the pyre without the use of force. She stretched her arms towards that quarter of the sky whence the sun was beaming, and prayed in a loud voice: "O Sun and Earth and you spirits above and beneath the earth who watch and punish the sins of men, bear me witness that I am innocent of the charges laid against me and that I gladly suffer death because of the unendurable agonies that fate inflicts on me. Receive me mercifully, but with all possible speed exact retribution from that she-devil, that evil adulteress—Arsake—who has contrived all this to rob me of my beloved."

At these words there was general uproar. While some of the crowd were still making up their minds to halt the execution for a second trial, others were already moving to do so, but, before they could act, Charikleia climbed onto the pyre and positioned herself at the very heart of the fire. There she stood for some time without taking any hurt. The flames flowed around her rather than licking against her; they caused her no harm but drew back wherever she moved towards them, serving merely to encircle her in splendor and present a vision of her standing in radiant beauty in a frame of light, like a bride in a chamber of flame.

Charikleia was astounded by this turn of events but was nonetheless eager for death. She leapt from one part of the blaze to another, but it was in vain, for the fire always drew back and seemed to retreat before her onset. The executioners did not let up but redoubled their efforts, encouraged by threatening signs from Arsake, hurling on logs and piling on reeds from the river, fueling the flames by whatever means they could, but all to no avail. The city was now in even greater uproar; this deliverance seemed to show the hand of god. "She is innocent," they yelled. "She has done nothing wrong!" The crowd surged forward and tried to drive the executioners away from the pyre. Their leader was Thyamis, who had joined them after being alerted to what was happen-

ing by the deafening tumult. He tried to embolden the people to go to Charikleia's assistance; but for all their eagerness to rescue her they did not have the courage to approach the fire, but instead urged the girl to leap out of the flames: anyone who could stand unscathed in the blaze had nothing to fear if she decided to come out.

Charikleia too had come to the conclusion that she owed her salvation to the gods, and when she saw what the people were doing and heard what they were calling to her, she decided not to show ingratitude to heaven by rebuffing its munificence. She leapt down from the pyre whereupon, as with one voice, the city exclaimed in joyful awe and invoked the gods' majesty. But it was more than Arsake could bear: she hastened down from the wall and, emerging at a run through a postern gate, escorted by a phalanx of bodyguards and Persian lords, laid hold of Charikleia with her own bare hands. Glaring fiercely at the populace, she said: "Do you feel no shame in trying to save an evil poisoner, a wicked and self-confessed murderess, who was caught red-handed, from just punishment? Not only are you rendering assistance to a heinous criminal, but you are flouting the laws of Persia, and the Great King himself too, with his satraps, lords, and judges. Perhaps you have been gulled into feeling sympathy for her and ascribing her deliverance to the gods because she did not burn in the fire. But come to your senses, and you will see that this is yet further proof of her sorcery! She is so steeped in the black arts that she can withstand even the power of fire! Come, if you please, to the council meeting tomorrow. It will be a public session expressly so that you can hear her admit her guilt and listen to the damning evidence of her accomplices, whom I have under lock and key."

So saying, she grasped Charikleia firmly by the neck and began to lead her away, ordering her attendants to clear a path through the crowd. Some people angrily considered resistance, but others gave way, being both influenced by the suggestion that she was a sorceress and, in some cases, intimidated by Arsake and the might of her entourage. So Charikleia was returned to the custody of Euphrates, and this time was fettered with even heavier chains than before to await a second trial and execution. But desperate though her plight was, she found in it one compensation that outweighed all her suffering: she was with Theagenes and could tell him what had happened. This was something else that Arsake had devised to spite and make cruel fun of them. She thought that it would cause the young couple more pain if they were shut up in the same cell so that they could see one another in chains and being subjected to corporal punishment, for she knew that a lover feels his beloved's pain more deeply than his own. But, on the contrary, this proved a great solace to them, and they were glad that they were both enduring identical hardships, for each felt that to undergo less severe punishment would have been a defeat at the other's hands, a sign of deficiency in love. Besides,

they were able to be together, to provide mutual consolation, to inspire in one another the courage to face with resolution and bravery whatever befell them, and not to flinch from the struggle for their chastity and devotion.

10 Deep into the night they talked of many things, naturally enough for two people who believed that after tonight they would never see one another again and who were enjoying one another's company as long as they might. Eventually they fell to considering the miracle at the stake. Theagenes was inclined to attribute it to the benevolence of the gods, who had been incensed by Arsake's iniquitous allegations and taken pity on her innocent and blameless victim. Charikleia seemed to be less certain.

"My bizarre deliverance," she said, "certainly bears all the marks of a supernatural or divine intervention to save me. But the fact that we are so beset by one misfortune coming directly after another and subject to such various and excessive torments suggests that we are under heaven's curse and the victims of divine malevolence—unless it is the divinity's way of working miracles to plunge us deep in despair and then deliver us from the abyss!"

11 Theagenes entreated her to keep her tongue from blasphemy and advised her to set even greater store by piety than by chastity,[186] but Charikleia continued her tirade until she suddenly broke off to exclaim: "Heaven have mercy on us! Such a dream I dreamed last night—if dream it was and not reality! At the time it somehow slipped from my thoughts, but now it comes back to me. The dream was in the form of a line of verse, and it came from the lips of Kalasiris, most blessed among men. Either I fell asleep without realizing, and he came to me in a dream, or else I saw him in the very flesh. It went something like this, I think:

> If you wear pantarbe fear-all, fear not the power of flame:
> Miracles may come to pass: for Fate 'tis easy game."

Theagenes shook like a man possessed and, so far as his chains permitted, sprang to his feet. "May heaven look kindly upon us!" he cried. "Memory is making a poet of me too! I have an oracle from the selfsame prophet; be it Kalasiris or a god in Kalasiris's shape, he appeared to me and seemed to speak these words:

> Ethiopia's land with a maiden shalt thou see:
> Tomorrow from Arsake's bonds shalt thou be free.

Now, I can guess the meaning of the prophecy as it affects me: by 'Ethiopia's land' it signifies, I think, the netherworld,[187] 'with a maiden'

186. Reading *πλέον ἢ καὶ σωφρονεῖν*.
187. Because both were inhabited by beings with black faces.

means I shall be with Persephone,[188] and the release from bonds is the departure of my soul from my earthly body. But what sense do your lines make? They are full of contradictions! The word *pantarbe* means 'fearing all things,' but then the commandment requires you not to be afraid of the pyre."

"My darling Theagenes," replied Charikleia, "misfortune has been so constant a companion that you have grown used to putting the worst construction on everything, for people are apt to allow their circumstances to shape their thoughts. But it seems to me that the words of the prophecy presage a brighter future than you are disposed to see. Perhaps 'the maiden' is me, and you are being given an assurance that, at my side, you will come to Ethiopia, my fatherland, free of Arsake and her bonds. How this will come to pass we are not told, and it is not easy to credit. But to the gods it is possible; they gave us this prophecy, and they will see that is is fulfilled. Their prediction concerning me at any rate has, as you know, already been effected as they willed it. Death seemed certain, but see! Here I am alive still. I carried my salvation with me, though I did not know it at the time; but now I think I understand. Even in the past, I have made a point of always keeping about my person the tokens of recognition that were exposed with me, but yesterday I was especially careful to do so, for I was about to stand trial, and I thought that day would bring my death. So I girded them around my waist out of sight: if I lived, they would assure me of the necessities of life; and if anything happened to me, they would serve to adorn me in the final sleep of the grave. They consist of precious necklaces and priceless gems from India and Ethiopia, and among them, Theagenes, is a ring, a gift that my father gave my mother when he asked her to be his bride. It is set with a jewel called pantarbe and inscribed with certain sacred characters; it is full, it seems, of a supernatural and mystic property, which I think must have endowed the stone with the power to repel fire and bestow immunity from the flames on its wearer. This it was that saved my life no doubt, by the gods' grace. So much is suggested and confirmed by what I was told by Kalasiris, that most blessed of men; on more than one occasion he related to me that this is described and explained by the writing embroidered on the band that was laid beside me—and which is now wound around my waist."

"That is plausible enough to be true—or at least consistent with what has occurred," said Theagenes. "But what new pantarbe will there be to deliver us from tomorrow's dangers? Unfortunately, it does not bestow immortality as well as immunity to fire, and we can presume that that

188. The daughter of Demeter, abducted by Hades to be queen of the underworld. Persephone was also known as Kore, "the Maiden"; this is the same word for "maiden" as that used in the first line of Theagenes' dream prophecy and facilitates his misinterpretation.

she-devil Arsake is at this very moment devising some different and more exquisite form of execution for us. May she condemn the two of us to a single death in a single hour. That I should not count death at all, but merely rest from all our sorrows."

"Take heart," replied Charikleia. "We have a second pantarbe in the prophecy the gods have made us. So let us trust in the gods: that way our deliverance will bring us greater joy, and we shall endure whatever ordeals we must with purer hearts."

12 So Theagenes and Charikleia passed the night in reflections of this kind, alternating between, on the one hand, lamentations and proud avowals that each felt more pain and anguish on the other's behalf than on his own and, on the other, the exchange of last wishes and oaths, sworn in the name of the gods and their present fortune, that they would remain true to one another in love so long as they lived.

Meanwhile, at the dead of night, when the whole town was asleep, Bagoas and his fifty horsemen reached Memphis. With hardly a sound they woke the sentries, spoke their names, and were recognized. Then quickly and noiselessly they made their way through the city to the satrap's residence. There Bagoas left the horsemen posted in a ring around the palace, ready to come to his aid if he encountered any resistance, and then entered alone through a small side-gate, whose existence was not public knowledge. The door was not strong, and he had little difficulty in forcing it. He made himself known to the gatekeeper, whom he ordered not to say a word, and then hurried to Euphrates; he knew the palace like the back of his hand, and besides there was a little moonlight that night to light his way. Euphrates was asleep in bed and leaped up in alarm when Bagoas woke him.

"Who is it?" he cried.

"It is Bagoas," he replied, and told him to keep quiet. "Have a light brought to us."

Euphrates called one of the slave boys who were sleeping in the next room and told him to light a lamp without waking any of the others. The boy returned, set the lamp on a stand, then withdrew.

"What is going on?" asked Euphrates. "What bad news have you got for us, suddenly turning up without warning like this?"

"That is soon told," replied Bagoas. "Take this letter and read it, but before you open it, examine the device on the seal and satisfy yourself that these orders come from Oroondates. Then do as he commands: you have the advantage of darkness and surprise; exploit it before anyone knows what is happening. Whether it would be a good idea to give Arsake the letter addressed to her before you do anything else, you must decide for yourself."

13 Bagoas handed the letters to Euphrates, who read them both. "This spells trouble for Arsake," he said, "though her condition is desperate

enough already: yesterday she suddenly developed a high fever, a punishment from the gods, it seems. Hot flushes spread over her entire body and still have not subsided. There seems little hope of her recovering. But even if she had been in the best of health, I should not have given her this letter; she would sooner have died and taken us all to perdition with her than have agreed to release the young couple. You have arrived in the nick of time, I can tell you. Take the strangers and go. Do whatever lies within your power to help them. Take pity on them, I beg you. They are hapless victims of ill fortune, who have been subjected to indignities and torments beyond counting, not that I enjoyed what I had to do but such were Arsake's orders. Besides, they seem to be nobly born and, as I know from what I have seen of their behavior, they are utterly pure of heart."

With those words he led Bagoas to their cell. The young couple were in chains, and the torture inflicted on them had begun to take its toll, but Bagoas was nevertheless impressed by both their stature and their beauty. Theagenes and Charikleia assumed that their end was at hand and that Bagoas and his men had come before time to take them on that final journey that led to death. For a moment their spirit failed them, then they collected themselves, and their faces broke into a broad smile that made it quite plain to all present that they felt less fear of death than joy at its approach. Euphrates and his men drew close and, seizing them roughly, began to release them from the planks to which their chains were fastened.

"My compliments to that she-devil Arsake!" exclaimed Theagenes. "She thinks to shroud her wicked deeds in the darkness of night. But the eye of Justice sees clear; it can detect and bring to light the most darkly kept wicked secrets. Do as you have been commanded. Whatever is ordained for us, be it fire, water, or the sword, the one grace that we ask of you is to let us both die the same death at the same time."

Charikleia added her pleas to his, and the eunuchs wept, for they could understand a little of what was said. They led them outside, still in their chains. Euphrates remained behind, but once Bagoas and his horse- 14
men were clear of the satrap's palace, they relieved the young couple of most of their chains, the few remaining being intended to prevent them escaping rather than to cause any suffering. They set each of them on a horse, then, forming a protective circle around them, they rode off posthaste towards Thebes.

For the rest of the night they rode without a break, and throughout the following day too they did not stop anywhere to rest, until, at about the third hour, the scorching heat of the sun blazing from the summer sky of Egypt grew too hot to bear. They were exhausted from lack of sleep and could see that so long a time in the saddle had pushed Charikleia in particular beyond the limits of her endurance. So they decided to

bivouac just where they were, to get their breath back, give their horses a rest, and allow the girl to refresh herself.

There was a sort of promontory in the bank of the Nile, where the water, prevented from flowing straight ahead, meandered through a semicircle, until it returned to a point in line with the place where the detour began. The area thus enclosed formed, as it were, an inland bay, which, the whole tract being well watered, was covered in lush meadows and produced, unworked by human hand, a rich profusion of grass and herbiage, where animals could graze to their hearts' content beneath a shady canopy of persea trees,[189] sycamores, and other plants whose natural habitat is the banks of the Nile. Here Bagoas and his men made their camp, the canopy of trees serving them for a tent. He divided his food between himself and Theagenes and Charikleia, whom he forced to eat despite their initial refusal: they said there was no point in eating when they were going to be dead within the hour, but they were won round by his assurances that nothing of the kind was going to happen and by the information that they were being taken not to execution but to see Oroondates.

15 The intolerable noonday heat was now beginning to abate: the sun was no longer beating down directly overhead, but its rays fell aslant as it began to sink in the west. Bagoas and his men were making ready to move on when a man on horseback rode up: he appeared to have been riding hard and was fighting for breath; his horse was streaming with sweat and nearly collapsing beneath him. He whispered something to Bagoas, then rested from his exertions. For a moment the eunuch gazed at the ground, apparently lost in thought at what he had been told. Then he said "Take heart, my friends. Your foe has paid the penalty: Arsake is dead. When she learned that we had taken you away, she hanged herself in a choking noose,[190] choosing to die by her own hand rather than wait for a death she could not hope to avoid, for she would not have escaped punishment by Oroondates and the Great King: either her throat would have been slit, or else she would have lived out the rest of her life in abject degradation. Such is the import of the message that the man who has just arrived has brought me from Euphrates. So take heart and be of good spirit: I am satisfied that you have done no wrong, and now you are rid of the woman who wronged you."

Bagoas said this in an attempt to make the young couple well disposed towards himself, but he spoke in a faltering Greek with many grammati-

189. *Mimosus schimperi,* a tree producing succulent pearlike fruit and regarded as holy by the Egyptians. Theophrastos (*Inquiry into Plants* 4.2.1) names the persea and the sycamore as distinctively Egyptian.

190. The phrase is quoted from Euripides *Hippolytos* 802, where the chorus breaks to Theseus the news of Phaidra's suicide.

cal errors[191] and a thick accent. His words were inspired in part by his own joy, for he had detested Arsake's tyrannous excesses while she was alive, in part by a wish to reassure and encourage the young couple, for he hoped, not without reason, to win great credit and favor with Oroondates if he could bring to him alive a young man who would eclipse the rest of the satrap's retinue and a girl of peerless beauty to be Oroondates' wife, now that Arsake was dead and gone. The news brought joy to Theagenes and Charikleia too. They acclaimed the power of divine justice, and it seemed to them that nothing could hurt them now, even if the worst of fates befell them, for their bitterest enemy lay dead. So it is that sometimes even death may be sweet, if one can see one's foes die first.

By now the cool of the evening was dispelling the suffocating heat and making traveling possible again. They remounted and rode on through the evening, all through the night and the morning of the following day, making all possible speed in the hope of reaching Oroondates before he left Thebes. Without success, however: on the road they met a man from the army, who told them that the satrap had already departed from Thebes; he himself had been dispatched to rally every single soldier and man-at-arms, including those left behind on guard duty, to assemble in haste at Syene, for everything was in uproar, and there was a danger that the satrap was too late and the town had already fallen to the Ethiopian army, which had pressed home its attack with a speed that beggared description. So Bagoas turned off the road to Thebes and headed for Syene.

He had nearly reached the town when he was surprised by an 16
Ethiopian ambuscade, a large number of well-armed young men who had been sent as an advance party to reconnoiter and make sure that the way ahead was secure for the whole army by testing it themselves. But, not knowing the area, they had lost their way in the dark and strayed so far ahead of their comrades that they thought it unwise to go any further. So they had concealed themselves in one of the reed beds on the Nile bank, which they had spent a sleepless night in securing as a strong point for themselves and a trap for the enemy. At the crack of dawn they saw Bagoas and his detachment of horsemen ride past. Having established that they were few in number, they allowed them to proceed a little way and then, having satisfied themselves that there were no others coming along behind, suddenly emerged from the marsh with a loud cry and gave chase.

Bagoas and the other horsemen were filled with alarm at this sudden shouting. They recognized their assailants as Ethiopians by the color of

191. There is no attempt to reproduce these errors in the Greek spoken by Bagoas.

their skin and could see that there were too many of them to stand and fight—the reconnaissance party comprised a thousand men, though not heavily armed. The mere sight of them was too much for the Persians, who turned and fled, though at first they withdrew at a rather more leisurely pace than they were capable of so as not to make it too obvious that they were running away. The Ethiopians set off in pursuit, throwing into the first line of attack all the two hundred or so Troglodytai[192] who were with them.

The Troglodytai form one of the constituent parts of Ethiopia. They are a nomadic people whose lands are adjacent to those of the Arabs. Naturally swift runners, they cultivate this gift by training from childhood. They have never learned to use heavy armor but in battle employ slings, which they use at long range: this can cause great damage to the enemy, but if they see that their opponents are getting the upper hand, they take to their heels, whereupon the enemy immediately gives up the chase, being well aware that the Troglodytai can run as swiftly as birds on the wing and conceal themselves in narrow cracks and hidden crevices in the rocks.

So on this occasion the Troglodytai on foot outran the horsemen and succeeded in causing a number of casualties with slingshot. But when the Persians turned and counterattacked, they did not stand their ground but ran back pell-mell to the main body of their friends, who were coming up some distance behind. Observing this and feeling nothing but contempt for such a paltry adversary, the Persians pressed home their counterattack with confidence and, having thus won a short respite from hostile attention, resumed their efforts to get away, spurring on their horses and giving them free rein to gallop as hard and as fast as they could. Most of them escaped by running into the shelter of a bend in the river Nile, which formed a sort of headland whose protruding banks enabled them to get out of sight of the enemy. Bagoas, however, was taken prisoner after falling to the ground when his horse stumbled and sustaining an injury to one leg that left him unable to move. Theagenes and Charikleia were captured too, partly because they had not the heart to abandon Bagoas, a man whose kindness towards them already had been such as to lead them to expect more; so they dismounted and stood by him when they might have got away. But in greater part this was a voluntary surrender, for Theagenes said to Charikleia that this was what his dream

192. This name was applied to cave-dwelling tribes from various places, but in particular to a people living on the coast to the south of Egypt. They were the subject of travelers' tales, and much legendary material accumulated around them, particularly concerning their speed of foot, which is first mentioned by Herodotos (4.183). Heliodoros has edited out some of their more implausible attributes, but his description of them, and of other exotic nations, reflects literary tradition rather than fact.

had foretold, that these were the Ethiopians to whose land it was their destiny to go after being taken prisoner; so it was right to place themselves in their hands and trust to the uncertainties of fortune rather than the certain dangers posed by Oroondates.

Charikleia knew now that Destiny was guiding her steps. She felt sure 17
that their fortune was about to take a turn for the better, and looked upon her assailants as friends, not foes. But of these thoughts she said nothing to Theagenes and pretended that it was his advice alone that had induced her to submit. When the Ethiopians drew near, they could see simply by looking that Bagoas was a eunuch and no soldier, and also that Theagenes and Charikleia carried no weapons but were prisoners—though prisoners of extraordinary beauty and nobility. They detailed one of their number, an Egyptian who could also speak Persian, to ask them who they were, hoping that they would understand one or other of these languages, if not both. Spies and scouts, I should explain, are dispatched to reconnoiter what is being said as well as what is being done, and experience has taught them to take with them people who speak the language of the local inhabitants and of the enemy.

The question was simple, and Theagenes had long been familiar with the Egyptian tongue. He replied that Bagoas was a person of some importance to the satrap, while he and Charikleia were Greeks, who until now had been traveling as prisoners of the Persians but whom a kinder fate perhaps was now delivering into the hands of the Ethiopians.

The Ethiopians decided to spare them and take them back alive. This was their first catch, as it were, and it was a fine one for them to present to their king: on the one hand, the most prized of the satrap's possessions (for eunuchs act as eyes and ears to the courts of Persian royalty, since they have no children or family, love for whom might divide their loyalties, but are entirely dependent on him who places his trust in them); on the other, the young couple, who would be a gift to adorn the retinue and court of their king.

So without a moment's delay they led them away, after mounting them on horseback, Bagoas because he was hurt, Theagenes and Charikleia because their chains made them unable to keep up with the rapid pace that was set. The scene was like the preliminary appearance and introduction of the actors in the theater before the play begins:[193] strangers in a foreign land, prisoners in chains who a moment ago had been haunted by a vision of their own violent death, were now being not so much led as escorted in captive state, guarded by those who were soon to be their subjects. Such was the position of Theagenes and Charikleia.

193. The technical terms used here (*proanaphonesis, proeisodion*) are obscure, and so the exact point of the comparison is unclear.

Book Nine

1 Syene meanwhile had been put under tight and complete siege: the Ethiopian army was staked out around the town like a ring of hunting nets; for when Oroondates realized that the Ethiopians had passed the cataracts and were almost upon him as they drove towards Syene, he had made a dash for the town, which he had managed to enter just ahead of them. Then he had barricaded the gates and lined the walls with spears, swords, and engines of war, and now was sitting tight, waiting to see what would happen next. Hydaspes, the Ethiopian king, had been in time to observe from a distance the Persian dash for Syene, but despite a vigorous pursuit had arrived too late to engage them before they entered the town. Thereupon he had unleashed his forces against the city, whose walls they encircled like a river, in numbers so vast that the mere sight of them made resistance inconceivable. The siege had begun, as the countless thousands of Hydaspes' men, weapons, and beasts combined to reduce the open plains of Syene to a narrow, crowded passage.

It was here that the scouting party found him and presented their prisoners to him. Joy welled in him at the sight of the young pair; he felt an instant attraction to his own flesh and blood, as, did he but know it, the prophetic intuition of his heart exerted its power over him. But he derived even greater joy from the omen afforded by the presentation of these bound prisoners.

"Excellent!" he exclaimed. "In the first spoils of war, the gods deliver our enemies bound into our hands! Let these, our first prisoners," he went on, "be kept safe for the victory sacrifices as the firstfruits of the war, for so Ethiopian law requires. They are to be kept under guard to be an offering to the gods of our homeland."

He rewarded the scouting party with gifts and sent them and their prisoners away to the supply train. He detailed a complete detachment of Greek-speakers to stand guard over the young pair and gave them instructions to spare no pains in catering to their needs and stint nothing in their care, but above all to keep them clean of all impurity, for they were now being kept as a pair of sacrificial victims. He also gave orders that their fetters were to be replaced with chains of gold, for in Ethiopia gold is customarily employed for the purposes for which other nations use iron.[194]

2 The guards put these orders into effect. The removal of the first set of chains raised hopes in the two lovers that they were to be given their

194. The wealth of Ethiopia is part of the literary tradition:

> The king [of Ethiopia] conducted them to a prison in which all the prisoners were bound with gold chains, for in Ethiopia the rarest and most precious metal is bronze. (Herodotos 3.23)

freedom, but these hopes were dashed when their guards loaded them with new chains, chains of gold. Theagenes could not contain his laughter. "A great improvement, I must say!" he exclaimed. "What kindness fortune is showing us! We change iron for gold,[195] captivity brings us riches, and now we are aristocrats among prisoners!"

Charikleia smiled too and tried to brighten Theagenes' mood by reminding him of what the gods had foretold and beguiling him with happier hopes for the future.

Meanwhile Hydaspes attacked Syene, which he expected to capitulate with its walls intact before a blow was struck. However, he suffered a temporary rebuff, since the defenders not only put up a spirited military resistance but also assailed him with outrageous and exasperating verbal abuse. Furious that they had so much as contemplated resistance rather than voluntarily delivering themselves into his hands at the first onslaught, he resolved not to exhaust his army by a lengthy siege, nor to make use of[196] his siege engines, which would inflict many casualties but at the same time afford a few a means of escape. Instead he decided to reduce the city by a spectacular siege tactic that would take less time and make no exceptions.

3 This is what he did. He divided the circuit of the wall into sections, allocated lengths of ten fathoms to groups of ten men, and told them to dig a trench whose dimensions he specified as being as broad and as deep as possible. While they dug, others removed the loose earth, and a third group heaped it up into a high mound, thus constructing a second wall to face the one under siege. No one attempted to prevent or disrupt the walling off of the town, for no one had the courage to make a sortie from the city to attack an army so immeasurably strong; and everyone could see that it was futile to shoot arrows from the battlements, for Hydaspes had taken the precaution of computing the distance between the two walls so as to ensure that his men would be out of range as they worked. He had countless hands at work to hurry the job along, so that it was completed more quickly than words can say; whereupon he commenced a second operation, which was as follows. He had left a section of his encirclement, about fifty feet wide, flat and unmounded, and from the two terminal points of his earthworks he now extended two arms to connect his excavations to the Nile, following the gradient from low-lying to elevated ground with each of these arms. One might compare the result to Long Walls.[197] The fifty-foot gap remained constant along the whole length, which was equal to the distance between Syene and the

195. Homeric allusion as at note 174.

196. Reading *ἀποπειρᾶσθαι* for *ἀποπειρώμενος*.

197. Defensive walls linking a city to the sea. The best-known were those connecting the city of Athens to its port, Peiraeus.

Nile. When the dike reached the riverbanks, he cut an inlet for the river and channeled the outflow into the canal formed by the two arms. The water was dropping from a raised position to lower ground,[198] from the immense breadth of the Nile into a cramped channel whose artificial banks kept it narrowly confined, and thus, around the inlet, it generated a thunderous and ear-splitting din, while along the canal it made a low rumbling that was audible for a great distance.

The sight and sound of all this was enough to bring home to the people in Syene just what a desperate predicament they were in: the purpose of the encirclement was to flood them out; escape from the city was impossible, since the earthworks and the water, which was drawing ever closer, barred the way out; but the dangers of doing nothing were equally obvious. So they took such steps as circumstances permitted to safeguard their own position. First, they packed the cracks between the planks in the city gates with oakum and pitch; then they strengthened the walls and reinforced their foundations, everyone carting along such materials as he had to hand—earth, stones, timber. No one was idle: women, children, and old men alike all joined in the work, for mortal danger is no respecter of age or sex. The fittest and those of age for military service were assigned to dig a narrow underground tunnel running
4 from the city to the enemy's earthworks, the operation being conducted in the following manner: first they sank a shaft about five fathoms deep close to the wall; once they had passed beneath the foundations, they began to dig horizontally and, by the light of torches, excavated an underground passage leading straight towards the earthworks. Those in front passed the loose soil to those behind, and thus it was handed back along the line and taken away to be dumped in an area of the city that for many years had been a public park. Here a great mountain of earth was accumulated. This was a precaution to allow the water, if it ever reached that point, to escape harmlessly along the empty passage, but for all their precaution[199] the calamity was too quick for them. The Nile had already passed along the long canal and now was flooding into the circular section, which it filled entirely, turning the space between the two walls into a lake. In an instant, Syene was an island, an inland town surrounded by water, washed by the waves of the flooding Nile.

To begin with, the wall held up for a short part of the day. But as the water level rose, the pressure increased, and the water began to seep deep into the ground through the fissures that the heat of summer had caused to open up in the black and fertile soil, and found its way underneath the base of the wall. At that point the soil beneath could no longer support the weight and gave way; and wherever the earth had become spongy

198. The river would be embanked to control the summer flood.
199. Reading *προμηθίαν* for *προθυμίαν*.

and had subsided, the wall began to settle too, with a shudder that made the danger all too plain, as the battlements tottered, and the defenders were thrown off their feet by the shock.

But as evening drew in, a section of the wall between two turrets did actually collapse, not to such a degree that the level of the breach was lower than that of the lake or that water came in; but the wall now stood only five cubits or so clear of the water and seemed liable to succumb to the flood at any moment. This was greeted with a wail of despair from every mouth in the city, audible even to the enemy. They raised their hands to heaven and, for this was the only hope left to them, called upon the gods to deliver them. They also pleaded with Oroondates to open negotiations with Hydaspes. To this he agreed, for, little though he liked it, he was fate's slave. But walled in as he was by water, he had no way of communicating with the enemy, until necessity suggested an idea.

He wrote down what he wanted to say, and then, fastening this message to a stone, used a sling to try to conduct negotiations with the enemy, firing his entreaties across the waves. But it was to no avail, for the shot was not long enough and fell into the water short of its mark. He repeated the attempt, shooting the same message, but again failed; and although every bowman and every slinger competed to reach the mark—for the mark they were all trying to reach was their own salvation—not one succeeded. Finally they stretched out their hands towards the enemy, who were standing on the earthworks watching their distress like an audience watching a play, and with pitiful gestures indicated as best they could the meaning of their shooting, in turns holding out their hands with the palms uppermost to signify their earnest entreaty, and then, in acceptance of enslavement, crossing them behind their backs, ready to receive the manacles.

Hydaspes realized that they were begging for their lives, which he was ready to grant them, for a good man has an obligation to show mercy to an enemy who submits; but for the moment there was nothing he could do, and so he decided to subject his enemy's intentions to a further test. He already had a number of ferryboats from the river standing by, which he had allowed to drift along the canal from the Nile and had made fast when they reached the circular earthworks. He selected ten of these that were newly built and manned them with bowmen and foot soldiers whom he sent to treat with the Persians after giving them strict instructions what to say.

They made the crossing fully armed so as to be ready to defend themselves should the people on the walls try anything untoward. This was a most extraordinary spectacle: a ship crossing from one wall to another, a sailor sailing over the countryside, a ferry plying over ploughed fields! War is a constant producer of surprises, but on this occasion it excelled itself to conjure forth a quite unprecedented situation, bringing shipborne

troops into conflict with wallfighters, making a soldier on dry land take up arms against another sailing the lake.

For when the men in the city saw the boats and the armed men in them heading towards the very place where the wall had been breached, they assumed, being distraught with terror at their perilous plight, that those who were in fact coming to their rescue were hostile (for when one is in an extremity of danger, nothing is without fear or suspicion), and began to hurl javelins and shoot arrows at them from the walls. So it is that even men who have despaired of their lives count every second's postponement of death a profit. They were not even shooting to inflict casualties, merely to prevent a landing. The Ethiopians returned their fire; they did not yet understand what was in the Persians' minds, and their aim was surer, so that they shot dead a couple or more, some of whom were catapulted headfirst from the walls into the water beneath by the force of the unexpected impact.

Indeed, the fighting might have flared up even further, for though the Persians were shooting only to hinder, rather than to kill, the Ethiopians were retaliating angrily—had not one of the prominent elders of Syene gone to the troops manning the wall and said: "You imbeciles! Has our predicament robbed you of wits completely? Hitherto we have been consistently imploring and beseeching them to come to our aid, but now when, beyond all our hopes, they have come, are we not going to allow them to land? If they come in friendship with proposals of peace, they will be saviors to us. On the other hand, if their intentions are hostile, it will be easy enough to overwhelm them even after they have landed—though I do not know what good it would do us if we did destroy these few when such a host encircles the city by land and water! Let us make them welcome and discover what their intentions are."

Everyone, including the satrap, thought that this was good advice. They stood away on either side from the breach in the wall and waited quietly with their weapons grounded.

6 The stretch of wall between the turrets was now cleared of the troops who manned it, and the populace began waving linen cloths to show that they would allow the Ethiopians to land. Only then did the Ethiopians venture nearer, and from the forum of the boats they addressed their beleaguered audience as follows. "Persians and those Syenians here present, Hydaspes, King of the Ethiopians who dwell to the East and to the West,[200] and now your sovereign also, has the capacity to destroy his en-

200. Compare *Odyssey* 1.22:

> Aithiopians, most distant of men, who live divided,
> some at the setting of Hyperion, some at his rising.

This reflects an archaic tradition placing Ethiopians in the regions of the world closest to the sun, the places where it rises and sets; cf. note 113.

emies utterly but is naturally inclined to take pity on suppliants. While he adjudges the former course a mark of strength befitting the act of a soldier, he considers the latter to show a love of humanity germane to his own character. He has it in his power to decide whether you live or die; but in response to your entreaties, he grants you relief from the obvious and indisputable danger that threatens you as a result of these hostilities. As for the terms on which you may obtain a welcome release from your predicament, he does not define them himself but leaves the choice to you. For he does not play the tyrant in his hour of triumph; rather he so regulates the fates of men as to avoid the wrath of the gods."

To this the Syenians replied that they surrendered themselves, their wives, and their children to Hydaspes to do with as he pleased: he was now master of their city, should it survive; but at the present time its situation was insecure and hopeless, unless the gods, or Hydaspes, came up with some immediate expedient for its preservation. Oroondates promised to abandon his claims on the places over which and for which the war had been fought, by recognizing Hydaspes as the rightful master of the city of Philai and the emerald mines. He requested to be put under no compulsion to surrender either himself or his men: if Hydaspes wished to demonstrate the full extent of his clemency, he should allow them to depart to Elephantine, on condition that they did no damage and offered no resistance. It was all one to him, he said, whether he died here and now or won an apparent reprieve only to be condemned later by the Persian king for having betrayed the army; in fact the former alternative was preferable, for he could probably look forward to some simple and conventional form of death, whereas in the latter case his execution would be of a most barbaric kind and specially devised to make his punishment as agonizing as possible.

Using arguments of this kind, he requested that two Persians be per- 7
mitted to come aboard the boats, on the pretense that they would go to Elephantine and, if the troops there would join in submitting to enslavement, he for his part would surrender immediately. The envoys responded by taking two Persians on board before returning to Hydaspes, to whom they made a full report. He laughed and berated Oroondates in no uncertain terms for his stupidity in presuming to negotiate on equal terms when his very prospects of life and death rested not on himself but on another.

"But it would be absurd," added Hydaspes, "for one man's folly to entail the loss of so many lives."

So he allowed Oroondates' emissaries to proceed on foot to Elephantine,[201] for the possibility of the troops there conspiring to oppose him

201. Heliodoros apparently did not realize that Elephantine is an island.

never occurred to him. Then he assigned some of his own men to dam the inlet that had been dug for the Nile, others to cut a second channel through the earthworks; thus the inflow would be stopped, while the outflow would drain the flooded area, so speeding the process of clearing the water from around Syene and making the ground dry enough to walk over. Those who had been allocated this task only had time to make a start on it before adjourning its completion to the following day, for no sooner had the order been given than night fell.

8 Those inside the city meanwhile continued to work for their salvation by whatever means were available to them, for they had not despaired of the possibility, remote though they knew it to be, of being rescued from their plight. Those who were digging the underground tunnel were now close to the earthworks, or so they judged by estimating by eye the distance from the wall to the dike and then measuring the same distance along the tunnel with a rope. Meanwhile others rebuilt by torchlight the section of the wall that had collapsed; this was an easy task, for the stones at the breach had rolled inwards. They thought that they had achieved a temporary security, but even so the night did not pass without a fresh alarm. About midnight a section of the dike where the previous evening the Ethiopians had begun to dig an outlet ruptured without warning: it may be that the earth in that section had been piled up loosely and not properly tamped down, so that the base gave way as the water soaked into it; or those excavating the tunnel may have created an empty space into which the base of the dike could collapse; or possibly the workmen had left the place where they had started their digging somewhat lower than the rest of the dike, so that as the water level rose during the night, causing a fresh influx, the water was able to find a way out through the place where the earth had been shoveled away, and, once that happened, the channel grew deeper without anyone being aware of the fact;[202] alternatively one might ascribe the event to divine intervention. The rupture was accompanied by such a thunderous crash, the mere sound of which was sufficient to fill men's hearts with dread, that although they did not know exactly what had happened, both the Ethiopians and the Syenians themselves jumped to the conclusion that the greater part of the city and its walls had fallen down.

The Ethiopians, who had nothing to fear, stayed quietly in their tents, waiting for daybreak to learn just what had happened. But those inside the city made a complete circuit of their wall; they each found their own section still intact and concluded that the damage had occurred elsewhere, but when the light of day dawned, it dispelled the fog of doubt and fear. The rupture in the dike was plain to see, and the water had sud-

202. I have modified the text of this long sentence in two places. The rise in water level is caused by the onset of the annual flood.

denly receded, for the Ethiopians were already at work blocking off the inlet that fed the lake, lowering sluice gates made of planks fastened together and buttressed with thick timbers on the landward side, and plugging the gaps with loose earth and brushwood. Many thousands of men were engaged in this operation, some working from the banks, others on boats. Thus the water receded, but it was still not possible for either side to reach the other, for the ground was covered by a thick layer of mud, and though the surface appeared dry and firm, a quagmire lurked beneath, waiting to suck under man and horse alike, if any ventured to set foot on it.

This situation continued for some two or three days. The Syenians 9
had thrown open their city gates, while the Ethiopians had laid down their weapons, both sides thus indicating that hostilities were at an end. It was in effect an armistice with no contact between the two sides. Neither side bothered to post guards anymore, while those inside the city in particular gave themselves over to merrymaking, for, by an odd coincidence, it happened to be the time of the Neiloa, the greatest of all festivals in Egypt. This feast is celebrated around the time of the summer solstice,[203] when the river shows the first signs of rising in flood, and is the most important in the entire Egyptian religious calendar, for the following reason: the Egyptians apotheosize the Nile and consider it the greatest of all divinities, hallowing the river as the exact counterpart of heaven: for without clouds or celestial precipitation it brings moisture to their fields and waters the ground like rain with the utmost regularity each year.[204]

This is the popular version, but the substance of their belief in the river's divinity is this: they believe that human life and existence derive principally from the conjunction of moist and dry elements, and their theory is that all other elements are subordinate to these two and occur only in combination with them; the Nile embodies the moist element; their own land, the dry. This much they disclose to all and sundry, but to initiates they reveal the truth that the land is Isis and the Nile Osiris, with these titles imparting a deeper meaning to the material objects. The goddess longs for her husband when he is away and rejoices at his return, mourns his renewed absence and abominates Typhon like a mortal enemy.[205] There is, I imagine, a school of natural philosophers and theologians who do not disclose the meanings embedded in these stories to lay-

203. Around 21 June. Many classical writers use this way of dating the start of the Nile flood.

204. This paragraph is taken, in great part verbatim, from a passage in the *Life of Moses* by the hellenized Jew Philon of Alexandria (2.195). Such comparisons are found in many classical authors.

205. Typhon (or Seth), the slayer of Osiris, in this allegory is identified with the desert sun and drought.

men but simply give them preliminary instruction in the form of a myth. But those who have reached the higher grades of the mysteries they initiate into clear knowledge in the privacy of the holy shrine, in the light cast by the blazing torch of truth.[206]

10 Well, may the gods pardon me for saying this much. The greatest mysteries may not be spoken of: let us respect their sanctity[207] as we continue our story of the events at Syene.

So it was the time of the feast of the Neiloa, and the local people were occupied with sacrifices and religious ceremonies. Physically they were exhausted by their terrible predicament, but spiritually they did not neglect their duty to reverence the gods, so far as the situation permitted. Oroondates waited until midnight, when the Syenians were sunk in a deep slumber as a result of their festivities, and stealthily led his army out of the town. He had previously given the Persians secret notification of a particular time and gate through which they were to make their escape. Each decurion had received orders to leave their horses and pack animals behind so as to avoid difficulties and prevent any disturbance that might lead to the detection of their enterprise; they were to collect their weapons and procure a plank or length of wood, and to bring nothing else.

11 When they had assembled at the appointed gate, Oroondates laid the lengths of wood brought by each decury crosswise on top of the mud, edge to edge with no gaps between them. Thus, with those in the rear continually handing the planks to those in front, he constructed a kind of bridge, across which he was able to take his army without difficulty or delay. After reaching dry land, he slipped past the Ethiopians, who had not foreseen anything like this and had not even bothered to mount a guard: they were sleeping, without a care as to what might happen. Then he led his army in one movement towards Elephantine at a speed that had them panting for breath. No one tried to prevent him entering the town; the two Persians who had been sent on in advance from Syene were on the lookout for his arrival every night (as they had been instructed), and when he gave the agreed password, they immediately threw open the gates.

As day broke, it began to dawn on the Syenians that the Persians had got away. First they each found individually that the Persians billeted in their homes were nowhere to be seen, next they conferred in groups, and

206. The metaphor is chosen to remind the reader of the torch-lit processions and ceremonies of the Isiac mysteries (Herodotos 2.62; Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.10, 11.27).

207. This pose of "religious silence" is modeled on Herodotos's practice in his account of the mysteries of Egyptian religion. Heliodoros's comments on the Isis myth are for the most part common knowledge and do not reveal any degree of personal acquaintance with the cult.

finally they were even able to discern the bridge. They were prey to renewed anxiety and fully expected to be charged with new crimes more serious than before: that, despite Hydaspes' magnanimity, they had demonstrated their treachery by conniving at the Persian escape. They resolved to make a massed exodus from the city and throw themselves on the Ethiopians' mercy, swearing solemn oaths to deny their complicity and hoping thus to move them to compassion. Young and old alike they collected, holding branches as a token of supplication, carrying lighted candles and torches. They placed the priestly caste and the images of the gods at the head of the procession like so many flags of peace and walked across the bridge towards the Ethiopians; but before they reached them, they fell to their knees in entreaty and with one accord and one voice set up a mournful and piteous wail of supplication. To excite even greater compassion they set their little babies on the ground in front of them and allowed them to go wherever chance took them, so using the most innocent and least culpable section of the population to mollify the ire of the Ethiopians. Terrified and unable to understand what was happening, the babes fled from those who had borne them, those who nursed them, and, guided perhaps by their fear of the deafening cries behind them, took the path that led towards the enemy, some crawling, others toddling unsteadily, all whimpering pathetically. It was as if chance were using them to stage an unscripted scene of supplication.

When Hydaspes saw this, he imagined that they were simply reinforc- 12
ing their earlier entreaties and acknowledging their submission in such a way as to leave no room for doubt; so he sent to ask them what they were about and why they had not brought the Persians with them. The Syenians told him everything: the Persians had escaped, but they themselves were entirely innocent; they had been celebrating a traditional festival and had been performing their religious duties so single-mindedly that they had not observed the Persians make their getaway while they were sleeping off their festivities; but they would probably still have escaped even if the Syenians had known what was afoot, for having no weapons they would have been powerless to stand in the way of armed men.

When this was reported to him, Hydaspes began to suspect the truth, that Oroondates was planning to deceive and surprise him somehow. He asked the priests to come to him unaccompanied, and after making obeisance to the images of the gods that they carried with them so as to heighten their feeling that they were under an obligation to tell him the truth, he asked whether they had any further information to give him about the Persians—what direction they had taken, who they were relying on, where they intended to attack. The priests replied that they knew nothing but surmised that they were headed for Elephantine, where the

greater part of their forces had assembled, including the armored cavalry,
13 on whom Oroondates placed particular reliance. Then they earnestly entreated him to come into the city—for it belonged to him, they said—and to put away the anger he felt against them.

Hydaspes did not think that this was the time to enter the city in person, but he sent two regiments of heavily armed infantry to discover whether his suspicions that this was a trap were correct and, if they were not, to garrison the town. Then he dismissed the Syenians with generous guarantees and formed his own army into battle array so as to withstand the Persian onslaught, or alternatively to mount an attack on them himself if they squandered the initiative. But before his deployments could be completed, scouts came galloping up to report that the Persians were on their way in battle formation. To recapitulate, Oroondates had issued instructions for the rest of his army to assemble at Elephantine, but when he observed the Ethiopians bearing down on him unexpectedly, he had been obliged to make a dash for Syene with a few troops; there he had been walled in by the earthworks and compelled to beg for his life; Hydaspes had promised to spare him, but then Oroondates had proved the most treacherous of men: he had arranged for two Persians to cross the water with the Ethiopians and dispatched them ostensibly to canvass opinion at Elephantine as to the conditions on which they would be prepared to make terms with Hydaspes, though in reality their mission was to discover whether they would rather make ready for battle at whatever time he himself might be able to make good his escape. He put this treacherous plan into effect: he found his men ready and waiting and marched out of the city with them at once, refusing to set his attack back by one minute but moving so quickly as to leave the enemy no time to make proper preparations—or so he thought.

14 By now he was within sight, his army drawn up ready for battle. Even from afar the pomp and show of Persia compelled the attention of every eye. From their gold and silver weapons lightning flashed and flickered over the plain, for the sun was not long risen and was shining full on the Persians' faces, so that their armor shone back with its own inherent brilliance, broadcasting an awesome coruscation into the furthest distance.

The right wing of Oroondates' line was held by Persians and Medes of native birth, heavily armed infantry in front with all the archers marching behind them so that, despite their lack of body armor, they would be able to shoot their arrows from a safe position behind the shield of the infantry. On the left wing he stationed his battalions of Egyptians and Libyans and all his foreign troops, and alongside them, as on the right, he placed javelin throwers and slingers with orders to make rapid sallies from the line and direct their fire at the enemy's flanks. He took the center himself, conspicuous in a scythed chariot, with a regi-

ment on either side to escort and protect him. The only troops he stationed ahead of himself were the armored cavalry, and it was largely because of his reliance on these that he ventured to fight at all. Of all the Persian formations these are generally the most effective, ranged before the line like a wall, impervious to the tides of war.

The form of their armor is as follows.[208] A man chosen for his exceptional physical strength dons a close-fitting helmet, beaten from a single piece of metal and cunningly crafted into a realistic representation of a human face, like a mask. This covers his head completely from crown to neck, apart from slits over the eyes so that he can see. His right hand is armed with a lance somewhat longer than a spear, leaving his left free to work the reins. A scimitar hangs at his side. His body armor covers not just his breast but the whole of the rest of his body as well. It is constructed in the following way. They take rods of bronze and iron and beat them into squares about a span in size; these are then fitted together so that they overlap at the edges, each plate riding over the one beneath and the one beside it so as to leave no gaps. This contexture is then fastened together with stitches underneath the overlaps, thus producing a garment of plate-mail that sits comfortably on the body, yet fits tightly all over, shaping itself onto every limb and contracting and expanding so as to allow unimpeded movement. The armor also has sleeves and extends from head to knee, the only opening being at the thighs, where it is necessary for the rider to bestride his horse. This, then, is their body armor, impervious to arrows and resistant to all injury. Their greaves reach from the soles of the feet to the knee, where they meet the body armor. 15

The horse too is protected by armor of a very similar kind: shinplates are fastened round its legs, its head is totally sheathed in tight-fitting frontlets, and a skirt of iron mail is draped over its back, down to its belly on either side, thus affording the animal protection while at the same time being loose enough not to hamper its galloping. Equipped and virtually encased[209] in armor of this kind, the rider bestrides his steed, though he is so heavy that he cannot mount it by himself but has to rely on others to lift him on. Then, in the hour of battle, he gives his horse its rein, digs in his spurs, and bears down at full tilt on the enemy, looking just like a man of steel or a hammer-worked statue come to life.[210] The

208. Although the Persians did employ armored cavalry of a kind, the description that follows is based on the cataphracts introduced into the Roman imperial army from the East by Alexander Severus, and has many points of contact with similar descriptions in other writers of the third and fourth centuries. We are therefore dealing with a literary commonplace, not firsthand observation.

209. Retaining the manuscript reading ἐσκευασμένος . . . ἐμβεβλημένος. The printed text makes these participles refer to the horse rather than its rider.

210. A statue made by beating sheets of metal onto wooden shapers rather than by casting. The indentations left by the hammer blows resemble the plates making up the suit of armor.

sharp end of the lance projects some way ahead horizontally and is supported by a clasp on the horse's neck, while the butt end is fastened into a loop on the animal's flank. Thus the lance is held firm against the force of impact and does not act against the rider's hand, which has only to direct the thrust as the rider braces himself and lunges forward to increase the force of the impact—which is so violent that the lance transfixes everyone in its path, often impaling two or more opponents at a single blow and carrying them along, skewered.

16 With these cavalry forces and with his army deployed as I have described, the satrap advanced to meet the enemy face-to-face, keeping his back to the river all the while. He was heavily outnumbered by the Ethiopians, but his plan was to use the river to prevent himself being encircled. Hydaspes moved forward to meet him. To face the Persians and Medes on the right wing he deployed the men of Meroe, heavy infantry and expert in hand-to-hand combat at close quarters. The men from the country of the Troglodytai and those who live near the Land of Cinnamon,[211] lightly armed but swift of foot and excellent bowmen, he assigned to harass the slingers and javelin throwers on the enemy's left. He reacted to the information that the Persian center boasted the armored cavalry by stationing himself and his squadron of turret-bearing elephants to face them; but in front he positioned the infantry of the Blemmyes and the Seres,[212] whom he had given special instructions to put into effect when the action began.

17 The standards were raised on both sides, and the signal was given for battle, by clarion calls on the Persian side, on the Ethiopian with bull-roarers and tom-toms. Oroondates called to his men and led his forces forward at the double. Hydaspes, on the other hand, told his troops to make their advance at a somewhat more measured pace to start with, accelerating gradually with each stride, so that the elephants would not lose touch with the front line and also so that the intervening distance would dissipate the impetus of the enemy's cavalry charge. The two armies were less than a bowshot apart now, and the Blemmyes could see the armored horsemen spurring on their steeds to the charge. Now they did as Hydaspes had instructed them, and, leaving the Seres to act as shield and defense to the elephants, they sprang forward some distance from their own lines and charged towards the armored cavalry as fast as they were

211. Modern Somalia; it was believed that cinnamon was produced in this area, though in fact it was imported from further east.

212. The Blemmyes were a nomadic tribe living to the south of Egypt. They acquired a semimythical status in classical literature and are often described as having no heads. From the third century onward they posed a continuing threat to the security of Egypt. The name Seres usually denotes Eastern silk-producers, i.e., the Chinese. The Seres are another exotic people of literary tradition. Their presence in Hydaspes' army perhaps derives from the tendency to identify Ethiopia with the east as much as with the south.

able. To all who saw them it seemed like madness for them to take the initiative in attacking an enemy so superior in numbers and so heavily armored. The Persians more than ever gave their horses their heads and thundered towards the foe, reckoning their impetuous courage an unlooked-for stroke of luck and confident that they would annihilate them the instant the charge struck home.

Now the Blemmyes were on the very point of closing with the en- 18
emy, were within inches of the points of their lances, when, all of a sudden and with one accord, they dropped to the ground and ducked underneath the horses, whose flying hooves brushed within a hair's breadth of their backs and heads. No one could have foreseen their next action: as the horses charged past, they stabbed upwards with their swords, causing terrible injuries to the animals' bellies. Many men fell there, as the horses in their pain ignored the reins' commands and threw their riders, who lay waiting on the ground, as helpless as lumps of wood, for the Blemmyes to finish them off with a thrust of the sword through the groin; for without someone to help him a Persian armored cavalryman is incapable of movement.

Those who escaped with their horses unscathed rode on towards the Seres, who held their ground until the enemy were almost upon them, then withdrew behind the elephants, as if the beasts afforded a refuge like that of a hilltop or fortress. There ensued a massacre, the virtual annihilation of the cavalry; for the horses had never seen an elephant before, and when they were suddenly confronted with the sight of them in all their grotesque[213] hugeness, it threw them into panic. Some tried to go back the way they had come; others collided with one another and threw their formation into instant disarray. Meanwhile the archers in the turrets on the elephants' backs (each turret was manned by six men, two shooting from each side with only the rear left idle) kept up such a constant barrage of accurately aimed arrows from the bastion of their turrets that to the Persians it seemed as dense as a cloud blotting out the sun,[214] especially as the Ethiopians directed their aim particularly at their enemies' eyes: to them it was more like an archery contest than an evenly matched battle, and their aim was so unerringly true that the horsemen who had been hit plunged in utter disarray through the melee, with the arrows protruding from their eyes like the twin pipes of a double flute.[215]

Any who were carried clear by the unstoppable momentum of their horses' charge were unable to prevent themselves being hurled upon the

213. I have modified the text.

214. Alluding to Herodotos (7.226), who says that at the battle of Thermopylai the Persian arrows were so numerous that they hid the sun. There is a satisfying irony here in that the Persians are now on the receiving end of a famous historical occurrence.

215. The musical instrument the *aulos* is depicted as two pipes (one for the melody, one for a drone bass), played simultaneously and held at an angle to one another.

elephants. Thus some of them were finished off there and then by the elephants, who tossed them in the air and trampled them underfoot; others by the Seres,[216] who sallied out from behind the cover of the elephants, where they had been lurking, wounded some with well-aimed arrows and grappled others off their steeds onto the ground. All those who survived withdrew without having made any impression whatsoever on the elephants, for the animal is clad in iron when it goes into battle, and nature has in any case endowed it with a hide like tempered steel whose surface is covered with a layer of scales so tough and impervious that it simply shatters any spear that strikes it.

19 The remainder of the army turned and fled, but the most dastardly act of cowardice was that of the satrap Oroondates, who immediately abandoned his chariot and mounted one of his Nisaian horses in an attempt to save his own skin.[217] The Egyptians and Libyans on his left wing, who were unaware of all this, battled on with great courage and, although they were getting the worse of the exchange, stood their ground stalwartly. The men from the Land of Cinnamon, who had been posted to oppose them, gave them a terrible time of it and caused them great embarrassment. Whenever the Egyptians and Libyans advanced, they would take to their heels and outrun them by some margin, though even as they ran they would shoot arrows backwards over their shoulders; then, when the Egyptians and Libyans retreated, they would move to the attack, some peppering the enemy's flanks with slingshot, while others sniped at them with little arrows smeared with serpent's venom, so causing an instant and agonized death. When the men from the Land of Cinnamon engage in archery, they seem to be playing a game rather than shooting in earnest. They tie a sort of circular mesh around their heads, through which they poke their arrows, all around the circle, with the flights nearest their heads and the tips pointing outward, like the rays of the sun. In battle all they have to do is to pull the arrows out of their headdress, as if from a quiver. And as they loose them against the foe, they prance and cavort, frolic and caper like satyrs, stark naked except for their wreath of arrows.[218] They have no need of iron to tip their shafts, for they take a bone from the spine of a serpent, make the body of it straight and true to act as the arrow shaft, and hone the tip to a very sharp point, so producing an arrow that is all of one piece. In fact it is not impossible that the Greek word for "arrow" (*oistos*) derives from the word for "bone" (*osteon*).[219]

216. Excising the intrusive words *ὑπό τε τῶν* Βλεμμύων.

217. Oroondates' flight is intended to recall that of the Persian king Dareios after his defeat by Alexander at Gaugamela.

218. This is verbally very close to a passage of Lucian's (*On Dancing* 18), with which it clearly shares a source. Ethiopian bowmen with arrows in their hair are depicted in the frieze of the Arch of Constantine in Rome.

219. This etymology is Heliodoros's own.

The Egyptians preserved their line intact for some time, locking shields to protect themselves from the arrows. They were naturally doughty warriors, who affected an indifference towards death, not that they stood to gain anything thereby except glory, though it may well be that they anticipated some awful punishment if they deserted their positions. But when they discovered that the armored cavalry, which was supposed to be the strongest contingent of their army and their greatest hope, had been destroyed, that the satrap had run for his life, and that the much-vaunted Median and Persian heavy infantry had followed all the others, without having performed anything of note in the battle but instead having come off much the worse from their exchange with the men of Meroe who confronted them, then the Egyptians too gave up the struggle and fled headlong from the field.

To Hydaspes from the vantage point of his turret it was apparent now that he had won a decisive victory. He sent heralds to tell his pursuing troops to refrain from bloodshed and to take as many prisoners as possible alive and bring them to him, but first and foremost Oroondates. And that is exactly what happened. The Ethiopians redeployed their formation into a line ... shields deep,[220] converting the great depth of their ranks into a long extension of their line on either side. Then they swung their wings inward, encircling the Persian forces and leaving only one way for the enemy to run—the way that led to the river. The majority were forced into the water by the melee of horses, scythed chariots, and the rest of the army. Thus they learned to their great cost that what had seemed a clever stratagem on the satrap's part was in fact a tactical blunder that had rebounded on them. His original dread of encirclement had led Oroondates to position his forces with their backs to the Nile and thus unwittingly block his own line of escape.

It was by the river that he was himself taken prisoner: Achaimenes, the son of Kybele, had now been informed of everything that had occurred at Memphis and, repenting of his allegations against Arsake—which he had not had time to substantiate before the evidence for them was destroyed—had formed the scheme of forestalling trouble by killing Oroondates in the general chaos. However, he failed to strike a mortal blow, and his misdeeds were instantly punished by a fatal shot from one of the Ethiopian archers, who not only recognized the satrap and meant to save him from death, as had been ordered, but was also much affronted by the criminality of a man in flight from the enemy attacking his own side and welcoming such an extremity in order to settle what appeared to be a personal score.

220. The printed text means "they extended their line on the shield side" (i.e., the left), which is immediately contradicted. I therefore read *ἐπ' ἀσπίδας* and suppose the omission of a numeral.

21 Oroondates' captor took him to Hydaspes, who, at the sight of him streaming with blood and at the very point of death, had his wounds staunched by means of an incantation performed by those expert in such practices. He resolved to save Oroondates' life, if he could, and tried to lift his spirits with reassuring words.

"My friend," he said, "your life will be safe: such is my will, for it is right that we should overcome our enemies with the sword while yet they stand and with kindness when they are fallen. But what did you mean by such a blatant act of perfidy?"

"My act of perfidy to you," replied Oroondates, "was one of loyalty to my own master."

"And what punishment do you consider appropriate for yourself in defeat?" was Hydaspes' next question, to which the satrap replied, "Whatever punishment my king would have demanded for one of your commanders who refused to betray his loyalty to you."

"I am sure," said Hydaspes, "that if he is a true king and no mere tyrant, he would have commended him, rewarded him, and allowed him to go free, aiming with such a commendation of another's servant to inspire his own to act in the same way. But, my dear friend, though you claim to have been loyal, even you would have to admit that it was folly so rashly to have ventured battle against such countless thousands."

"Perhaps it was not such folly," replied Oroondates, "to have gauged the way my king's mind would work. His rigor in punishing any who show themselves cowards in war tends to exceed his generosity in honoring the brave. So I decided to confront the danger head-on: either I would win a great and unexpected victory, which is the kind of miracle that the crises of war often produce, or else if I was lucky enough to get away with my life, the way would be clear for me to say in my own defense that I had done all that it was in my power to do."

22 Hydaspes concluded the interview by commending Oroondates and then having him conveyed into Syene, but not before instructing the physicians to lavish all their skill on him. Then he entered the town himself, accompanied by the flower of his army. The whole city, young and old alike, turned out to greet him, showering his soldiers with garlands and Nile blossoms and singing Hydaspes' praises in victory hymns. No sooner had he entered the walls—an elephant substituting for the triumphal chariot—than he turned to the sacred duty of offering thanks to the gods for his victory. He inquired of the priests what the origin of the Neiloa was and whether there were any curiosities in the city that they could show him.

They took him to see the well that measures the Nile, which is almost identical to the one at Memphis: it is constructed of close-fitting blocks of polished stone and has an engraved scale marked in cubits; the river

water seeps underground into the well, where its level against the markings registers the rise and fall in the level of the Nile for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area, who are able to gauge the degree of inundation or shortage of water by the number of divisions covered or exposed.[221] They also showed him the sundials that cast no shadow at noon, for in the latitude of Syene[222] the light of the sun is perpendicularly overhead at the summer solstice and thus throws equal illumination on all sides of an object, precluding the casting of a shadow. Likewise the water at the bottom of wells is directly illuminated. Hydaspes, however, was not much impressed by these sights, which were already familiar to him: exactly the same occurred, he said, at Meroe in Ethiopia.

Next the priests claimed that their festival was celebrated in a god's honor, for to such status did they exalt the Nile, to which they gave the title of Horos, Giver of Grain and Giver of Life, Lord of all Egypt, Savior of the South, Father and Creator of the North,[223] who each year brings fresh silt (in Greek *nea ilys*, which, they suggested, is the origin of the name *Neilos*,[224] or Nile), who marks the seasons of the year—the summer by its flooding, the autumn by its recession, and the spring by the flowers that bloom on its banks and the hatching of the crocodiles' eggs; the Nile, they said, is actually the year incarnate, as is confirmed by its name—for if the letters in its name are converted to numerals, they will total 365, the number of days in the year.[225] They ended by describing the peculiarities of the local fauna and flora, and much else besides.

"But all these things of which you speak so proudly belong not to Egypt but to Ethiopia," replied Hydaspes, "for this river, this god as you call it, and every creature in it, comes to you from the land of Ethiopia, which thus in fairness should be the object of your worship, for it is the mother of your gods!"

"Then worship it we do," exclaimed the priests, "especially since it is responsible for the epiphany of you, our god and savior!"

221. This whole passage is extremely close to the description of the Nilometer at Elephantine by Strabo (17.1.48). No doubt Heliodoros and Strabo derive their information from the same source. Devices of this kind were essential in a country whose agriculture depended entirely on the annual inundation of the Nile.

222. Syene lies almost exactly on the Tropic of Cancer, where the sun is directly overhead on the day of the summer solstice—which, of course, is the time of year when this section of the novel is set. The shadowless sundial and illuminated well bottom are often mentioned in connection with the city.

223. Horos was the son of Isis, born after the death of his father, Osiris, at the hands of Typhon/Seth. He was called Savior of the South because the Nile flood waters an otherwise arid land, and Creator of the North because it was widely believed that Lower Egypt was formed by the alluvial mud deposited at the mouth of the Nile.

224. This fanciful etymology is depressingly widespread.

225. The letters of the Greek alphabet did double duty as numerals. If the letters of the Greek word Neilos are read as numerals and added together, we have the sum 50 + 5 + 10 + 30 + 70 + 200 = 365.

23 Remarking that their compliments ought to fall short of blasphemy, Hydaspes retired to his tent, where he passed the remainder of the day resting after his exertions. He threw a banquet for distinguished Ethiopians and the priests of Syene, and gave the rest of his men permission to do likewise. The people of Syene supplied his army with many a herd of cattle and flock of sheep, and flocks of goats and droves of swine[226] in even greater numbers, along with a vast quantity of wine. What they did not give as a gift, they sold to the Ethiopians.

The following day, seated on a lofty throne, Hydaspes distributed to his army the horses and beasts of burden and all the other material taken as spoils both in the town and in the course of the battle, carefully weighing the merits of each man's actions. When it came to the turn of the man who had captured Oroondates and saved his life, Hydaspes said to him, "Ask for whatever you wish."

"I have no need to ask, my liege," replied the man. "If you will approve what I have done, I have sufficient reward already in what I took from Oroondates when I saved his life as you commanded."

So saying, he held up the satrap's sword belt, a magnificent object studded with gems, which must have cost many talents in the making. Many of the bystanders exclaimed that it exceeded the estate of a private individual, that it was rather a kingly treasure. But Hydaspes smiled and said: "What could be more kingly than that my magnanimity should not fall short of this fellow's cupidity? Besides, the conventions of war permit anyone who takes a prisoner to take spoils from his captive. So let him have with my blessing what he could easily have had without, had he chosen to keep it secret."

24 Next came the turn of the captors of Theagenes and Charikleia. "Sire," they said, "the spoils we brought you were not gold or precious stones. These things are cheap in Ethiopia and lie in heaps in the storerooms of your palace. Rather we have presented you with a maiden and a young man, Greeks, brother and sister, surpassing all mankind (save only yourself) in stature and beauty. In return we ask not to be excluded from your generosity."

"You did well to remind me," said Hydaspes. "It was a hectic time when you presented them to me, and I was too busy to spare them more than a passing glance. Someone go and fetch them; and let the rest of the prisoners be brought too."

This was done immediately: a runner was sent to the baggage train outside the walls and told their warders to take them to the king as quickly as they could. They asked one of their guards, a half-caste Greek,

226. This list is couched in Homeric terms and echoes *Iliad* 11.678–79.

where they were being taken now. He replied that King Hydaspes was inspecting his prisoners.

"We are saved! The gods be praised!" the young couple exclaimed in unison, for they recognized the name Hydaspes, though to that moment they had had no proof that he had not been succeeded by another king.

Theagenes whispered to Charikleia: "Obviously, my love, you will tell the king the truth about us. This is indeed Hydaspes, who you have often told me is your father!"

But Charikleia replied: "My darling, great ends can only be achieved by means of equal greatness. A story whose beginnings heaven has made convoluted cannot be quickly resolved. In particular it may be dangerous to reveal abruptly things that the passing years have made obscure, especially when the central figure of our entire story, the key to the whole tangled web of complexity and recognition, is missing. I refer, of course, to my mother, Persinna, whom we know to be yet living, by heaven's grace."

"But what if we are sacrificed before we see her?" interrupted Theagenes. "What if we are given away as booty of war and so prevented from ever reaching Ethiopia?"

"We shall not be; quite the reverse," said Charikleia. "You have often heard the guards say that we are being nurtured as sacrificial victims to the gods of Meroe. There is no chance of our being given away or killed too soon, for we are dedicated to the gods by a solemn promise that it would be wrong for men with such a deep respect for piety to break. But if we let ourselves be carried away by our joy and reveal the truth about ourselves before the time is right, when those who could recognize and corroborate the truth of our story are not present to do so, then we run a risk of unwittingly annoying our hearer and becoming the objects of his justifiable anger, for he might well think it wicked claptrap for a couple of prisoners marked out for slavery to concoct some incredible tale and dramatically impose themselves on the king as his own children."

"But the recognition tokens," said Theagenes, "which I know you keep safe about your person, will corroborate that we are more than a tale or an imposture."

"The recognition tokens," replied Charikleia, "are tokens only to those who know them or to those who laid them beside me. For those who do not know them or do not recognize every item, they are mere precious trinkets, which might well bring their bearer under suspicion of being a thief or a robber. And even if Hydaspes should recognize one of them, who is there to prove to him that it was Persinna who gave them to me, to prove that she gave them to me as mother to daughter? The one incontrovertible token of recognition, Theagenes, is maternal in-

stinct, which, by the workings of an unspoken affinity, disposes the parent to feel affection for her child the instant she sets eyes on it. Let us not deprive ourselves of the one thing that would make all the other tokens convincing."

25 In the course of this exchange they had reached the king's presence: Bagoas had been brought too. When he saw them standing before him, Hydaspes leapt from his throne for a moment.

"Heaven have mercy!" he exclaimed, then sank back, lost in thought. The dignitaries at his side asked him what was wrong.

"I dreamed that a daughter just like this girl had been born to me this very day," he replied, "and had matured instantly to just such a youthful beauty. I paid no attention to the dream, but now I am reminded of it by the identical appearance of the person I see before me."

His courtiers replied that this was an image generated by the soul, which frequently prefigured the future and gave it form in dreams. So he pushed his vision to the back of his mind for the moment and inquired who they were and where they were from. Charikleia said nothing, but Theagenes replied that they were brother and sister and came from Greece.

"Well done, Greece!" exclaimed the king. "Her sons are men of sterling worth, and, most important, she has presented us with noble and auspicious victims for the sacrifices to mark our victory."

Then, turning to his entourage, he said with a smile: "How was it that a son was not born to me too in my dream? If this young man, the girl's brother, was to appear before me, he ought also, by your account, to have been prefigured in my dreams."

Then he addressed himself to Charikleia and asked in Greek (for this language is cultivated among the naked sages and rulers of Ethiopia): "As for you, girl, why do you say nothing? Why do you make no answer to my questions?"

"At the altars of the gods, for whom we know we are being kept as sacrifice," she replied, "there shall you know who I am and who are my mother and father."

"And just where in the world are your mother and father?" asked Hydaspes.

"They are here," she answered. "They will be there at my sacrifice, have no doubt!"

Hydaspes smiled again. "My dream child really is a creature of dreams," he said, "if she imagines that her mother and father will be transported from Greece to the heart of Meroe! Bring them with us and pay them the customary attentions; they must want for nothing if they are to grace our sacrifice. But who is this standing here? He looks like a eunuch."

"He is indeed a eunuch," replied one of the attendants. "His name is Bagoas, and he is Oroondates' most-valued possession."

"Let him go with them too," ordered Hydaspes, "not as a sacrificial victim but to protect one of the victims: this girl, who is so young and beautiful that much careful thought is required to keep her free from stain until the hour of our sacrifice. Jealousy is endemic in eunuchs: they are employed to prevent others enjoying the pleasures of which they are themselves deprived."

So saying, he continued his inspection of the prisoners as each came in 26
turn before him, and decided their fates. Those whom fortune had marked as born to be slaves he gave away, while those who were well-born he allowed to go free. He selected ten young men and an equal number of girls from those who were notable for their youthful beauty, and commanded that they should be taken south with Theagenes and his companion, to serve the same purpose. All requests made of him he granted, until finally he came to Oroondates, who had been summoned and fetched on a litter.

"I am now master of the places for which the war was fought," he said. "The original reasons for our enmity, namely Philai and the emerald mines, are now in my possession. However, I resist the all too human temptation to turn success to excess. I do not exploit my victory to extend my dominions indefinitely. I am content with the boundaries that nature drew when she first made the cataract to divide Egypt from Ethiopia. I have that for which I came north, and now I shall respect what is right and return home. If you live, govern your original satrapy and write this message to the king of Persia: 'Your brother Hydaspes, having overcome you by force of arms, has in his wisdom allowed you to keep all that is yours. He welcomes your friendship if you are prepared to give it, for of all human things friendship is the fairest; but he will not refuse to fight, should you begin hostilities again.' To these people of Syene I grant ten years' exemption from payment of their appointed tribute, and I charge you to give this effect."

These words were greeted with an acclamation of praise by the assem- 27
bled townsfolk and soldiers, who cheered and clapped as one, so loudly that the noise was audible far into the distance. Oroondates held out both his hands, crossed his right arm over his left,[227] bowed his head, and made obeisance, though it is unlawful among the Persians to reverence any king but their own in this fashion.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I do not consider that I am transgressing our traditional principle if I recognize as king the man to whom I owe my satrapy, nor that I am breaking any law in making obeisance to the man

227. In a symbolic invitation to bind his hands; apparently authentic.

who has more respect for law than all mankind. It was in his power to kill me, but in his mercy he gave me life: fate had made me his slave, but he allowed me to be a satrap. Wherefore, if I live, I give my word that there will be unbroken peace and everlasting friendship between Ethiopia and Persia, and I promise to uphold your edict concerning Syene. But if anything should happen to me, then I pray that the gods may reward Hydaspes, his house, and his nation for his noble actions towards me."

Book Ten

1 Let this be the end of our narrative of events at Syene: from so perilous a predicament the city had passed in an instant to such felicity, owing to the righteousness of one man.

Hydaspes sent the larger part of his army on ahead and then set off for Ethiopia himself, escorted for a considerable distance by the entire population of Syene and the entire Persian army, both hymning his praises. To begin with he followed the banks of the Nile and kept to the areas watered by the river, but when he reached the cataracts, he sacrificed to the Nile and the gods of Egypt and then turned away from the river and marched inland instead, until he came to Philai, where he rested his army for two days or so. Then he sent most of his army on ahead once more, while he stayed at Philai to strengthen the city's defenses and install a garrison, having done which, he departed. He selected two horsemen, who were to ride ahead, changing to fresh horses at every town and village so as to accomplish their mission with all possible speed: to these he gave letters announcing the good news of his victory to the people of Meroe.

2 To the wise men, known as gymnosophists, or naked sages, who form a cabinet that the king consults on matters of policy, he wrote as follows:

> King Hydaspes to the most reverend Council.
> I write to you with the glad tidings of our victory over the Persians, not in boastfulness at my triumph, for I have no wish to provoke the changeability of fortune, but to pay my prompt respects in this letter to your powers of prophecy, which have proved correct now as ever. Wherefore I invite and implore you to come to the accustomed place, where your presence will sanctify for the Ethiopian commonalty the sacrifices to be performed in thanksgiving for my victory.

To his wife, Persinna, he wrote as follows:

> I write to inform you that I am victorious and, which is of more concern to you, that I am safe. Make preparations for magnificent

pageants and sacrifices to render thanks. Add your own invitation to the sages to that contained in my letter. Then make haste with them to the glade outside the city walls[228] that is consecrated to our ancestral deities, the Sun, the Moon, and Dionysos.

When these letters were delivered, Persinna exclaimed: "This explains 3
the dream I saw in my sleep last night. I dreamed I was with child and that I gave birth at the same instant: the child was a daughter, who grew in a trice to womanhood. The dream must have been using the pains of birth to symbolize the anguish of the war, and the daughter to represent victory. Now go to the city and make it resound with your glad tidings."

The advance riders did as they were told. Crowning their heads with the lotus that grows along the Nile, and waving palm fronds in their hands, they rode through the main streets of the city, where their mere appearance was sufficient proclamation of victory. In an instant Meroe was filled with joy as night and day, in their families, in their communities, in their clans, the people danced and offered sacrifice to the gods, festooning their sanctuaries with flowers and rejoicing not so much at the victory as at the safe return of Hydaspes, whose righteousness, combined with his civility and graciousness towards his subjects, had instilled an almost filial devotion in his people's hearts.

Persinna had herds of oxen, horses, and sheep, of zebras and griffins[229] 4
and other creatures of every variety, taken across the river to the sacred glade to await the ceremony. There were enough for a hecatomb, a hundred victims of each and every species to be offered in sacrifice, while the remainder would provide a feast for the populace. Next she went to the gymnosophists, who had their abode in the temple of Pan;[230] she handed them the letter from Hydaspes and joined him in begging them to accede to the king's request by gracing the ceremony with their presence, which she would also consider a personal honor to herself.

They asked her to wait a moment and withdrew into the inner sanctum to pray to the gods as was their wont and ask them what they should do. After a few minutes they returned and stood in silence while Sisimithres, the president of their college, said: "We will come, Persinna. The gods give us their leave. But the divine power warns that the

228. Alluding to Herodotos's story (3.18) of the Table of the Sun, "a meadow situated in the outskirts of Meroe," where a plentiful supply of sacrificial meats was kept perpetually replenished.

229. Reading *ὠρρύγγων* (Colonna). Griffins were mythical beasts, half lion, half eagle; see note 246.

230. The worship of Pan is mentioned nowhere else in the novel, though Heliodoros may be alluding here to a tradition that Pan was worshiped in Ethiopia, attested by Diodoros (3.9) and Strabo (17.2.3). But perhaps it would be more appropriate to read here "Pantheion" (temple of all the gods) for "Paneion" (temple of Pan).

sacrifices will be disrupted by some commotion or disturbance, the outcome of which, however, will be good and joyful: you have lost a limb, the royal house has lost a member, but in that hour destiny will enable you to find that which you seek."

"Your mere presence," replied Persinna, "will be sufficient to transform any danger whatsoever into a blessing. When I hear that Hydaspes is at hand, I shall inform you."

"There is no need to inform us," said Sisimithres. "He will arrive tomorrow morning. A letter will come shortly to tell you so."

This was exactly what happened. Persinna was on her way back to the palace and had nearly reached the gates when a man on horseback handed her a letter from the king, which informed her that he would arrive the following day. Heralds immediately proclaimed this information throughout the city, but only those of the male sex were permitted to greet the returning king: women, they announced, were excluded. As the sacrifice was to be performed in honor of the Sun and the Moon, the purest and most resplendent of the gods, it was forbidden for the female sex to take part, lest the sacrificial victims be polluted by any uncleanness, however involuntary. The only woman allowed to be present was the Priestess of the Moon: this was Persinna, for by law and tradition the king was Priest of the Sun, and the queen Priestess of the Moon. Charikleia also was to be present at the rite, but not as an onlooker—she was to be sacrificed to the Moon-goddess.

An irresistible thrill of anticipation swept the city. Unable to wait for the appointed day to dawn, people began crossing the river Astaborrhas the previous evening, some by the bridge, others in riverboats made out of reeds. These craft were moored in great numbers up and down the riverbanks to facilitate the crossing for those whose homes were too far from the bridge. They are very nippy little vessels, being constructed from such a light material and incapable of taking any weight other than two or three men. They are in fact no more than a reed split down the middle, each half forming a boat.

5 Meroe is the capital of Ethiopia.[231] In form it is a triangular island bounded on all three sides by navigable rivers: the Nile, the Astaborrhas, and the Asasobas.[232] The first of these, the Nile, breaks upon the apex of

231. The ruins of the city of Meroe, center of the powerful Ethiopian kingdom, lie beside the Nile in the Sudan, south of the Nile's confluence with the Atbara. The tract of land bounded by the Atbara, the Blue Nile, and the Nile is known as the island of Meroe, although it is not really an island. Many classical authors, however, conceived of it as literally an island in the Nile. Though wildly inaccurate in absolute terms, Heliodoros's geography is passably in harmony with Greco-Roman beliefs, especially in its stress on the fertility of the region.

232. These names are authentic, but classical writers do not agree about their application to particular rivers.

the triangle, where it splits into two; the other two rivers run along either side of the island until they rejoin to form one river, the Nile, which subsumes their names as well as their waters. In size Meroe is so vast that, despite being an island, it presents the impression of being a continent; its length comprises 345 miles; its breadth, 115.[233] It provides a habitat where enormous animals, including elephants, can flourish, and is so fertile that it produces the tallest trees in the world. Apart from gigantic palm trees that bear massive, succulent dates, the ears of corn and barley grow so high there that they can completely conceal even the tallest man on horseback—or even, occasionally, on camelback!—and are so prolific that the seed sown is increased 300-fold. The size of the reeds that grow there has already been touched upon.

So throughout the night in question people crossed the river by their 6
various means, and in the morning they welcomed Hydaspes back, meeting him on the road and paying him godlike respects. The people at large traveled some distance along the road to meet him, but the gymnosophists waited to greet him at the edge of the holy glade, where they clasped his hands, embraced, and kissed him. The last person to welcome him home was Persinna, who was waiting at the temple gate, inside the sacred precinct. After prostrating themselves in homage to the gods and discharging their vows of thanksgiving for his victory and safe return, they left the precinct and turned their attention to the public sacrifice, taking their seats in the pavilion that had been erected in readiness in the plain. This was a square structure, whose weight was borne by four freshly cut reeds which stood like columns, one in each corner; their upper sections were arched over and connected to make, with the addition of palm fronds, a dome that formed a canopy over the space beneath. There was a second pavilion close by, where, on an elevated dais, had been set images of their national gods and likenesses of the heroes whom the kings of Ethiopia regard as the founders of their house: Memnon and Perseus and Andromeda. Beneath these, on the lower step of the dais, sat the gymnosophists, so that the gods appeared to stand over them. All this was ringed by a regiment of foot soldiers, resting on their shields, which they held vertically, with no gaps between them, so creating an unobstructed space in the middle from which the crowd was excluded and where the ceremony could be performed.

After a short address to the people, in which he reported his victory and the successes he had won on behalf of the state, Hydaspes commanded the officiants to commence the sacrifice. A total of three lofty al-

233. These measurements are not invented but are taken from a source used also by Diodoros (1.33) and Strabo (17.2.2), who, however, describe the island as shield-shaped rather than triangular. In one manuscript of Heliodoros a scribe's comment has been incorporated into the text: "Totally wrong if you reckon accurately"!

tars had been erected, two of which, those to the Sun and the Moon, were adjacent to one another and separate from the third, which stood by itself in a different place: this altar was dedicated to Dionysos, to whom the Ethiopians customarily sacrificed animals of every kind, propitiating him with such all-embracing variety in token, I presume, of his benevolence to all without distinction of class. As for the other two altars, to the Sun they offered a team of four white horses, dedicating to the swiftest of the gods, it seems, the swiftest of all mortal creatures;[234] and to the Moon a pair of bullocks, probably choosing to sacrifice creatures that help us to work the land in recognition of the goddess's own association with the earth.

7 But before the ceremony could be completed, it was interrupted by an outbreak of shouting, as incoherent and disorderly as one might expect from so immense and nondescript an assembly. "Perform the traditional rite!" shouted the crowd. "Now make the time-honored offerings for the nation's safety! Offer the gods the firstfruits of the war!"

Hydaspes understood that they were demanding the human sacrifice that was always performed to celebrate victories over foreign foes, though on no other occasions, the victims being supplied from the prisoners captured. Waving his hand and nodding his head to indicate that their request would be granted without delay, he gave orders for the prisoners who had long ago been marked out for this purpose to be fetched. So they were all brought before the king, including Theagenes and Charikleia. Their chains had been removed, and wreaths placed upon their heads. They all looked dejected, naturally enough—though Theagenes somewhat less than the rest—with the exception of Charikleia, whose countenance was radiant and smiling and who stared so long and so hard at Persinna that the queen suffered some distress at the sight of her and said, with a deep sigh: "O husband, what a girl you have selected for the sacrifice! Never to my knowledge have I seen anyone so beautiful. How noble her expression is! With what dignity she confronts her destiny! What pity I feel for her youth and beauty! If the only child I ever bore, the little daughter that was so cruelly taken from me, had been allowed to live, she would now be about the same age as this girl. I wish, husband, that there were some way to give her exemption. It would be a great comfort to have one such as her to wait on me. The poor child might even possibly be a Greek: her features are not those of an Egyptian."

234. An allusion to Herodotos 1.216:

> The only god they worship is the sun, to which they sacrifice horses; the idea behind this is to offer to the swiftest of the gods the swiftest of mortal creatures.

I have inserted the word *θνητῶν* into the text of Heliodoros, as the allusion requires.

"She *is* a Greek," replied Hydaspes. "As for her mother and father, the moment has come for her to tell us who they are: she could scarcely produce them before our eyes. Of course not! Though that is what she promised.

"It is not possible to save her from sacrifice, though I should be only too happy if it were, for I too am touched in some indefinable way and feel great pity for her. But, as you are aware, convention demands that we offer human sacrifice, male to the Sun, female to the Moon. This girl was the first prisoner brought before me and was marked out for the ceremony we must perform today. The crowd would never countenance a replacement for her. There is just one thing that might save her, and that would be if, when she stepped onto the gridiron that you know of, she were discovered to be not altogether clean of the taint of intercourse with men, for the law commands that the woman presented to the goddess should be undefiled, and likewise the man offered to the Sun, though it makes no such distinction as regards the sacrifice to Dionysos. But consider this: if the gridiron were to convict her of having had intercourse with a man, it would not be proper for us to receive such a person into our palace."

"Let her be convicted," answered Persinna, "so long as her life is spared. Captivity, war, and exile so far from the land of her birth are sufficient excuse for such conduct, particularly in the case of this girl, whose very beauty is an incitement to violence against her—if indeed she has suffered anything of that kind—which accompanies her everywhere she goes."

While Persinna was still speaking, and trying to conceal her tears from 8
the assembled company, Hydaspes gave orders for the gridiron to be fetched. The attendants selected prepubertal children from the crowd, for these are the only people who can touch the gridiron without risk of injury,[235] and with their help carried it out of the temple and set it down where all could see. Then they commanded the prisoners to step onto it one by one. As each of them set foot on it, the soles of his feet were immediately scorched; some could not even endure the first instant of contact. The gridiron is made from a lattice of gold bars and is imbued with a power so strong that it can incinerate anyone who is unclean or in any other way perjured, while allowing those of the opposite condition to walk painlessly over it. Apart from a couple of young women who were shown to be virgins by walking over the gridiron, they were all allocated to Dionysos and the other gods.

But then Theagenes stepped onto the gridiron: he was shown to be 9

235. Because only in prepubertal children can virginity be guaranteed. Young children were in fact employed in cult for precisely this reason.

without stain. Everyone was impressed, not simply by his beauty and stature, but more especially by the fact that a young man such as he, in the full vigor of his youth, was ignorant of the joys of Aphrodite. As they began to prepare him for sacrifice to the Sun, he whispered to Charikleia: "A life of virtue earns a fine wage in Ethiopia: sacrificial slaughter is chastity's reward! But why do you not make your identity known, my love? What are you waiting for now? For someone to slit our throats? Speak out, I implore you, and reveal your true status. Once you are recognized for who you are, you may be able to intercede for my life too. But even if you cannot obtain that grace, you, at least, will assuredly be spared. If I know that, I can die happy."

"The hour of my trial is at hand," replied Charikleia. "Even now destiny is weighing our fate in the balance."

Then, before the people supervising the test could tell her what to do, she produced, from a little pouch that she was carrying, her Delphic robe, woven with gold thread and embroidered with rays, and put it on. She let her hair fall free, ran forward like one possessed, and sprang onto the gridiron, where she stood for some time without taking any hurt, her beauty blazing with a new and dazzling radiance as she stood conspicuous on her lofty pedestal; in her magnificent robe she seemed more like an image of a goddess than a mortal woman. A thrill of wonder ran through the crowd, who in unison made the heavens resound with their cry, wordless and unmeaning, but expressive of their astonishment. What they found expecially awesome was that she had preserved pure and undefiled a beauty so far surpassing that of humankind, even in the springtime of its years: visible proof had been furnished that, for all her youthful charms, the greatest ornament to her beauty was chastity.

The crowd as a whole was saddened by this confirmation that she was meet for the sacrifice, and, despite their religious scruples, they would have been glad to see some miracle occur to save her. But none was more grieved that Persinna, whose distress was so great that she turned to Hydaspes and said: "Poor, unhappy child. This proud show of chastity is ill timed and will cost her dear. Death will be her only reward for such virtue. What can be done, my husband?"

"It is pointless to press me," he replied. "Your pity is wasted on one who cannot be saved, one who, it seems, has been reserved from birth for the gods by reason of her natural excellence."

Then, turning to the gymnosophists, he said; "All-wise ones, everything is ready. Why do you not begin the ceremony?"

"Do not speak such words," answered Sisimithres, in Greek so that the people should not understand what he was saying. "Our eyes and ears are defiled enough by what we have already witnessed. Now we

shall withdraw into the temple,[236] for neither can we ourselves approve of anything as barbaric as human sacrifice nor do we believe that is pleasing to the divinity. I only wish it were possible to put an end to all animal sacrifice as well and be satisfied with offerings of prayers and incense such as we make.[237] But you stay here—for a king must serve the wishes of his people, misguided though they sometimes are—and perform this sacrifice which, for all its uncleanness, is nonetheless required of you by the traditional ordinances of Ethiopian law. Later you will need purification—though perhaps you will not, for I do not think that this sacrifice will reach its consummation, a prediction I base on signs given by the godhead, particularly the halo of light around the strangers, a sure sign that they are under the protection of one of the lords of heaven."

With these words he and the rest of the high council rose to their feet 10
and made as if to withdraw. But Charikleia leapt down from the gridiron, ran to Sisimithres, and threw herself at his feet, although the attendants tried their hardest to restrain her, for they imagined that her supplication was nothing more than an appeal for her life to be spared.

"All-wise ones," she said, "wait a moment. I have an action to bring, a suit to plead against those who hold sovereign power, and I am told that you alone have judicial authority over such people. For me it is a question of life and death, and you must decide it. I shall demonstrate to you that it is neither possible nor proper for me to be sacrificed to the gods."

The gymnosophists gladly took up her plea. "Your Majesty," they said, "do you hear the appeal to law made by this stranger and her demands for her rights?"

Hydaspes laughed. "What kind of suit, on what basis, can this person have against me? On what grounds and with what entitlements is it brought?"

"To learn that we must hear what she has to say," replied Sisimithres.

"Would it not seem more like a case of outrageous insolence than a case at law if I, the king, have to defend myself against charges made by a captive woman?" said Hydaspes.

"Justice does not stand in awe of station," Sisimithres replied. "At law there is but one king: he who has the stronger case."

"The law permits you to judge cases only between the crown and its native subjects," said Hydaspes, "not foreigners."

236. This episode is apparently modeled on one in Philostratos's *Life of Apollonios* (1.31), where the sage withdraws from the sacrifice of a horse after making an offering of incense.

237. Reading *νόμον* and repunctuating as necessary.

"For a wise man," retorted Sisimithres, "a person's character is as important as the color of his face in reaching a judgment."

"We can be sure that she will say nothing worth listening to," said Hydaspes. "She will just give us a string of fictions to buy herself time, typical of people whose lives are in danger. Nevertheless, let her speak, to please Sisimithres!"

11 The prospect of deliverance from her besetting woes had already lifted Charikleia's spirits, but her joy was compounded when she heard the name of Sisimithres; for he it was who had taken her up when she was abandoned by her mother so long ago, and who had entrusted her to Charikles' keeping ten years previously when he was sent to Katadoupoi as an envoy to Oroondates over the issue of the emerald mines; at that time he had simply been a member of the college of gymnosophists, but now he had risen to become their president. Although Charikleia did not recollect his face, for she had been a mere child, no more than seven years old, when she was parted from him, she nevertheless recognized his name, and her joy was compounded, for she hoped to have his collaboration and corroboration to assist her recognition.

She stretched her arms towards the sky and cried so all could hear: "O Sun, forefather of my ancestors, and you other gods and heroes who founded our race, I call on you to bear me witness that I shall speak no untruth, and to render me your aid in the trial that now awaits me. I shall begin my case with this question: Does the law enjoin on you, sire, the sacrifice of aliens or of your own countrymen?"

"Aliens," he said.

"Then it is time for you to find a new victim to sacrifice," she said, "for you will find that I am a native of this land of ours!"[238]

12 In spite of Hydaspes' astonished assertions that she was not speaking the truth, Charikleia continued: "You evince surprise at the least important part of my revelation: the most important is yet to come. Not only am I an Ethiopian, but I am of the royal house and bound to you by the closest ties of kinship."

Once more Hydaspes dismissed her words as arrant nonsense, but then she said, "Please, Father, no more of this abuse of your own daughter!"

It was now obvious that the king's dismissal of Charikleia's questions was giving way to anger and that he considered the whole business wicked claptrap.

"Sisimithres," he exclaimed, "and the rest of you, do you see the consequences of your tolerance? The girl is downright insane, telling blatant lies in an attempt to avert death, casting herself in the role of my daugh-

238. Retaining the manuscript reading.

ter to resolve a hopeless situation like a *deus ex machina* in the theater, when in fact, as you well know, I have never known the joy of fatherhood, except once, when in a single instant I was given the news of my child's birth and lost her. Take her away, someone! Let us have no more of her schemes to delay the sacrifice!"

"No one shall take me away," exclaimed Charikleia, "until the judges so decree. You are a party in the case before the court; it is not for you to reach a verdict. The law may permit you, sire, to kill aliens, but neither law nor nature allows you, Father, to murder your own child! For today the gods shall proclaim you a father, deny it as you will. In every case that comes to trial, sire, two types of evidence are recognized as most conclusive: documentary proof and corroboration by witnesses. Both types I shall adduce to demonstrate that I am your daughter. The witness I shall call is no ordinary member of the public, but the very person who is hearing the case—and I think that a speaker can produce no proof more conclusive than the judge's own acquaintance with the facts—while the document I present is this narrative of my own destiny—and yours!"

And with these words she brought forth the band that her mother had 13
laid out beside her and that she wore around her waist, unfolded it, and presented it to Persinna. The instant she saw it, the queen was struck dumb with amazement, and some time passed while she scrutinized first the writing on the band and then the girl; she was seized with a fit of palpitations, perspiration streamed from every pore, as joy at the return of what had been lost combined with perplexity at this incredible and unlooked-for turn of events, and with fear that Hydaspes might be suspicious and incredulous of these revelations, possibly even angry and vengeful; so that even Hydaspes became aware of his wife's anguished astonishment and said: "What is this, wife? Why are you so affected by the appearance of this document?"

"Sire," she answered, "lord, husband. I have nothing more to say. Take the band and read it. It will tell you all there is to tell."

She handed it to him and relapsed into forlorn silence. Hydaspes took the band and called on the gymnosophists to stand beside him and read it with him. As he read, he was filled with wonderment and could see that Sisimithres was equally astounded, for his expression testified to an infinity of shifting emotions and his gaze was fixed on the band and on Charikleia. Hydaspes read of the exposure of his child and the reasons for it, but at last he said: "I know now that a girl-child was born to me: at the time I heard from Persinna's own lips that the baby was dead, but I see now that it was abandoned at the wayside. But who was it who took her up, saved her, and fed her? Who was it who took her to Egypt where she has now become my captive? Indeed, how can we be sure that this is she, that the child did not perish after being abandoned, that someone

did not chance upon the tokens of recognition and has not made use of the gifts of fortune[239] by bestowing them on this girl and using her as a kind of mask, so exploiting my desire for a child and imposing upon us a false and supposititious line of succession, clouding the light of truth with this band?"

14 At this point Sisimithres intervened. "The first of your questions is easily answered: the man who took her up after she had been abandoned, who concealed her and brought her up, who took her to Egypt when you sent me there on a diplomatic mission, is none other than myself: and you know from experience that our code forbids the telling of lies. Furthermore, I recognize the band, which, as you can see, is inscribed in the Ethiopian royal script, proving beyond any shadow of doubt that it originated here and nowhere else. That it is embroidered in Persinna's own hand, you yourself are best qualified to confirm. But there were other tokens exposed with the child, which I gave to the man who took over responsibility for the girl. He was a Greek, and evidently a person of good character."

"They are safe too," said Charikleia, whereupon she produced the necklaces, the sight of which threw Persinna into a deeper state of shock, so that when Hydaspes asked her what these objects were and whether she had anything more to tell him, the only answer she made was that she recognized them, but it would be best to examine them in the privacy of the palace.

Once again her words produced an obvious unease in Hydaspes, and Charikleia added, "These tokens might be for my mother to recognize, but this ring is specially for you," and she showed him the pantarbe. Hydaspes recognized it, for he had given it to Persinna as a gift when he asked her to be his wife.

"Madam," he said, "these are tokens that I recognize, but that you who bear them are my child, not merely someone who has chanced upon them, I do not yet recognize. Apart from anything else, your skin has a radiant whiteness quite foreign to Ethiopian women."

"The child I rescued," said Sisimithres, "was white when I rescued her; and besides, the number of years tallies with the girl's present age, for some seventeen years in all have passed since the exposure, and she is seventeen years old. There is a striking similarity in the expression of the eyes; and the whole stamp of her features, the excellence of her beauty, are familiar to me: what I see now is in accord with what I knew then."

"This is all very well, Sisimithres," retorted Hydaspes, "the kind of thing one might expect from an impassioned advocate rather than from a judge. But beware lest, in answering one point, you raise another ques-

239. I have followed the alternative manuscript tradition here in omitting a phrase.

tion, a serious one that is far from easy for my consort to answer: how could we, Ethiopians both, produce, contrary to all probability, a white daughter?"

Sisimithres shot him a wry glance and said with a slightly condescending smile: "I do not know what is wrong with you. It is not like you to criticize me for an advocacy that I see no reason to regret. We define the true judge as the one who advocates justice. In the end you will probably think me as much your advocate as the girl's, for, with god's help, I shall prove that you are a father, and I shall not forsake the daughter whom I preserved for you in her cradle now that she is safely restored in adulthood. But think what you will about us, for we attach no importance to it. We do not live to please others: our only goal is perfect virtue, and if our own consciences are satisfied, it is enough.

"In any case, the solution to the problem about the color of her skin is contained in the band, where Persinna here admits to having absorbed certain images and visual forms of resemblance from the picture of Andromeda that she saw while having intercourse with you.[240] If you desire further confirmation, the exemplar is to hand. Take a close look at Andromeda, and you will find that she is reproduced in this girl exactly as she appears in the painting."

At a word of command from the king, the attendants went to take 15
down the picture, which they brought and set up next to Charikleia. This occasioned universal cheering and acclaim: those members of the crowd with the slightest understanding of what was being said and done explained it to their neighbors, and the exactitude of the likeness struck them with delighted astonishment. Even Hydaspes could hold out no longer in his disbelief but stood motionless awhile, possessed by a mixture of joy and amazement.

"There is one point remaining," said Sisimithres, "for we are talking about the throne and its legitimate line of succession—and, most important, about truth itself. Bare your arm, girl: she had a black birthmark on her upper arm. There is nothing indecent in laying bare that which will confirm your parentage and descent."

Straightway Charikleia bared her left arm, and there was a mark, like a ring of ebony staining the ivory of her arm![241] Persinna could contain herself no longer. Suddenly she leapt from her throne, ran to Charikleia, 16
and threw her arms around her. As she held her tight, she burst into tears and, unable to control herself for joy, set up a sort of animal howling (for a surfeit of pleasure very often gives rise to mournful wailing) and very nearly bore Charikleia to the ground.

240. The Greek text is mangled here; the translation follows Toup's emendations.

241. Alluding to *Iliad* 4.141, where blood running down Menelaos's leg calls forth the simile of colored ivory.

The sight of his wife's distress touched Hydaspes, and his heart was moved to compassion, but he stood with his eyes fixed as unblinkingly on the scene before him as if they had been of horn or steel, fighting back the welling tears.[242] His soul was buffeted by waves of fatherly love and manly resolve that fought for possession of his will, which was pulled in two directions by their opposing tide races. But finally he bowed to all-conquering nature: not only was he convinced that he was a father, but he also betrayed a father's feelings. Persinna was on the ground, clasping her daughter, and as Hydaspes raised her to her feet, he visibly embraced Charikleia and poured out a libation of his tears to acknowledge his fatherhood.

Nevertheless, he was not altogether deflected from what he had to do. For a moment he stood and looked at his people, whose emotions were no less than his own and who were weeping from a mixture of delight and pity at destiny's stage management of human life. An unearthly clamor rose from their lips to make the heavens resound, and, call as the heralds might for silence, the people paid no attention, though they did not make the meaning of this uproar plain. Hydaspes raised his arm and with a motion of his hand stilled the tempest that raged in the people.

"My people," he said, "as you can see and hear, the gods, beyond all expectation, have shown me to be a father. Abundant evidence identifies this girl as my daughter. But so all-surpassing is my devotion to you and the land of my birth that, without a second thought for either the continuation of my line or the joy of being called father—all of which she would have brought me—I am resolved to sacrifice her to the gods for your sake. I see your tears; I see your perfectly natural emotions; your regret that she must die so young, your regret that my hopes for the continuation of my line are to be dashed, is clear to me. And yet I have no choice: though possibly you might prefer me not to, I must obey the law of our fathers and put the interests of the nation above my own. Whether it is the gods' wish to bestow her on me and take her from me in the space of a single instant—a blow that fell on me once before at her birth and that falls on me again now at her return—I cannot tell, nor do I know whether they will accept the return to them through sacrifice of one whom they exiled from the land of her birth to the uttermost ends of the earth and then miraculously brought home in the condition of a prisoner of war and restored to the bosom of her family; these are questions I leave you to ponder.

242. From *Odyssey* 19.209ff.:

> but Odysseus
> in his heart had pity for his wife as she mourned him,
> but his eyes stayed, as if they were made of horn or steel,
> steady under his lids.

"When she was my foe, I did not slay her. When she was my prisoner, I did not abuse her. But now that this same girl is revealed as my daughter, I shall not flinch from offering her up in sacrifice, for it is your will that I should. I shall not succumb to feelings that any other father might be forgiven for succumbing to. I shall not falter. I shall not kneel before you and entreat you to indulge me by this once merely going through the motions of compliance with the law while in reality attaching greater importance to the emotions that spring from parenthood, making the excuse that the godhead can be served equally well by other means. Your evident sympathy for us, your obvious involvement in our agony, have only increased my concern for your welfare. I care little for my own loss, little for the sorrows of poor Persinna here, whom a single hour has made a mother for the first time and then childless. So then, if you will, cease your tears, put away your empty commiserations, and let us proceed with the ceremony.

"And you, my daughter—now for the first and last time I call you by the name I have yearned so long to speak—you who have gained nothing from your beauty, have gained nothing by returning to your parents, who have found a worse fate in your own country than in foreign parts (for in other lands you found deliverance; in the land of your birth, only death), do not confuse my heart with sorrow,[243] but now if never before conduct yourself with the pride and courage befitting a king's daughter. Come with your father: he has not been able to robe you in a bridal gown; it is not to marriage torches and a bridal chamber that he has brought you, but it is for sacrifice that he adorns you now, and the torches he lights are not those of the wedding ceremony but those that burn on the altar of sacrifice, to which he brings your peerless and supreme beauty as an offering.

"And gods, if in the coils of passion I have uttered any word that offends against piety, forgive me, for I am the man who has to slay his child in the very instant of calling her by that name!"

So saying, he laid hold of Charikleia and made as if to lead her to- 17
wards the altars and the fire that burned on them, though the fire of sorrow that smoldered in his own heart was hotter than any altar fire. And all the while he prayed that his oration, whose rhetoric he had contrived to ensure its ineffectiveness, would fail to carry its point. But his words jolted the Ethiopian assembly into activity: they would not allow Charikleia to take so much as a single step towards the altar, and exclaimed loudly, as with one voice: "Let the girl live! Let the blood royal live! The

243. This is quoted almost exactly from Achilles' reply to the appeals of Phoinix at *Iliad* 9.612:

> Stop confusing my heart with lamentation and sorrow.

gods have preserved her; you must do the same! We are satisfied; the requirements of the law have been met as far as we are concerned. We recognized you as our king; now recognize yourself as a father! May the gods forgive this apparent infringement of the law; it would be a greater infringement if we opposed their will. No one must slay her whose life they have saved! You are father of the people; now be a father in your own house!"

These cries were accompanied by countless others of a similar nature, until finally the people made it plain that they were prepared physically to prevent the sacrifice, by blocking Hydaspes' path, barring his way to the altars, and demanding that the gods' favor be won by sacrificing any victim but her.

Hydaspes was only too glad to admit defeat: he had prayed for his hand to be forced, and he complied willingly. It was clearly going to take some time for the exultant and unremitting chanting of the people to die away, with such exuberance were they prancing and cheering; so he made no attempt to cut short their jubilation and waited for them to calm down in their own good time.

18 He moved to Charikleia's side and said: "My dearest child, that you are my daughter is proven by the tokens of recognition and confirmed by the testimony of Sisimithres, though it is the benevolence of the gods that is most responsible for the revelation. But who is this man who was taken prisoner with you and set aside to be offered to the gods in our victory sacrifices, and who is now at the altar awaiting immolation? How did you come to call him your brother when you were first presented to me at Syene? Surely he will not be discovered to be our son! Persinna was with child once only—and that was you!"

Charikleia blushed and lowered her eyes. "I lied when I said he was my brother," she said, "but the falsehood was the product of necessity. It would be better if he told you himself who he really is, for he is a man and can explain himself with less shame and embarrassment than I could as a woman."

Hydaspes did not grasp the true sense of what she said. "Forgive me, little daughter," he said, "if the question I asked you about the young man offended your virgin modesty and brought a blush to your cheeks. Go into the pavilion and sit with your mother. Indulge her pleasure at your return, for even the labor of your birth cost her less agony than the impatience she now feels to enjoy your company. Tell her about yourself; comfort her. I shall see to the sacrifice once we have selected the girl to be sacrificed in your stead, alongside the young man, if we can possibly find one fit to take your place."

19 Charikleia almost wailed aloud in her anguish at this reference to Theagenes' immolation; it was with some difficulty that she refrained

from anything so inopportune and forced herself to subdue the frenzy of her emotions to the exigences of her situation. Once more she tried to work round stealthily to her goal.

"My lord," she said, "in sparing me the people may have consented to forgo the female sacrifice altogether, thus relieving you of any further obligation to find a girl. If anyone insists that the sacrifice must be performed without subtraction, with victims of both sexes, then you must look not only for another girl, but for another young man as well. Otherwise you will have to kill not another girl, but me, as you originally intended."

"Be careful what you say," said Hydaspes, and asked her reason for saying this.

"Because," she replied, "it is my god-given destiny to live while this man lives and die when he dies."

But still the truth had not dawned on Hydaspes. "Daughter," he said, 20
"I commend your kindliness. It is right that you should feel compassion for this Greek stranger and try to find a way to spare his life: you and he are of an age, you have endured captivity together, and there has grown up between you the intimacy of exile in foreign lands. But it is absolutely impossible for him to be exempted from the sacrifice. For one thing, it would be sacrilegious for the ancestral rite of offering sacrifices in thanks for victory to be dispensed with entirely; and, most important, the people would not stand for it. It was only with great difficulty and through the benevolence of the gods that they were moved to countenance your reprieve."

"Your Majesty," replied Charikleia, "—for it may be impossible for me to call you father—if it is through the benevolence of the gods that my body has been saved from death, then it would be part of that same benevolence to save from death my soul also, which the gods know they fated to be my soul in very truth. But if this turns out to be contrary to the will of destiny, and the stranger must definitely grace the ceremony with the sacrifice of his life, at least grant me one wish: bid me slay the victim with my own hand; bid me take the sword in my hand as a treasure beyond price and earn undying renown among the Ethiopians for my courage!"

Hydaspes was thoroughly perplexed by this request. "I cannot under- 21
stand your complete change of heart," he said. "A moment ago you were trying to shield the stranger; now you are seeking leave to be his killer, as if he were your bitterest enemy. To my eyes, there would be nothing noble or meritorious in such an act, at least for a girl of your age. And even if there were, it is not possible. This function is traditionally confined exclusively to those ordained to serve the Sun and the Moon, and these are not chosen at random but must have, respectively, a wife

or a husband. Thus your virginity prevents me granting this extraordinary request of yours."

"There is no obstacle on that count," whispered Charikleia, bending close to Persinna's ear. "There is a man I can call husband, if you will give your consent."

"You shall have our consent," replied Persinna with a smile, "and if the gods approve, we shall lose no time in marrying you to a husband chosen as being a fit match for you and ourselves."

"There is no need," replied Charikleia, raising her voice, "to choose a husband I already have."

22 She was on the point of explaining herself more fully, for the urgency of the situation compelled her to speak out boldy, and the danger all too visibly threatening Theagenes forced her to ignore the qualms of a virgin's modesty, when she was interrupted by Hydaspes, who could contain himself no longer.

"O gods!" he exclaimed, "you seem to have mixed ill fortune with the good. You gave me unlooked-for happiness, but now you seem to prevent me enjoying it to the full. You have shown me a daughter I never expected to see, but she seems to be mad. She talks such nonsense that her mind must be unhinged. She spoke of a brother, who does not exist. When I asked her who this stranger, who does exist, was, she said she did not know. But then she made every effort to save the life of this unknown stranger, as if he were a friend. And then, when she was told that her request could not be granted, she begged on bended knee to be allowed to sacrifice him with her own hands, as if he were her bitterest enemy. When we told her that was forbidden, as there is only one woman, a woman with a husband, who is sanctioned to perform this kind of sacrifice, she claimed to have a husband, without saying who he is: how could she when he does not exist and has been shown by the gridiron never to have existed? Unless of course in her case and her case alone the test of chastity that has never yet lied to the Ethiopians is not telling the truth, lets her step on and off it without being burnt, and graces her with a kind of bastard virginity; unless of course she has a license denied the rest of us to call the same people friend and foe in the same breath and invent nonexistent brothers and husbands for herself!

"Go into the pavilion then, wife, and try to clear her head. Either she has been intoxicated by the presence of one of the gods at this ceremony, or else the surprise of her good fortune has caused such a surfeit of joy that it has addled her brain! For my part, I shall give someone the task of seeking and finding the woman to be sacrificed in her stead, and in the meantime I shall occupy myself in receiving the embassies from the provinces of our empire and accepting the gifts they bring in honor of our victory celebration."

And with these words he seated himself on a high throne beside the pavilion and commanded the ambassadors to come forward and present any gifts they might have brought. Whereupon Hermonias the chamberlain inquired whether it was his will that he should present them all together or in turn, separate and distinct, one nation at a time. Hydaspes 23
replied that he wished to see the embassies in order, individually, so that each might be accorded the honor they deserved.

"In that case, sire," replied the chamberlain, "the first to be presented will be Meroebos, your brother's son. He has just arrived and is waiting at the entrance to the assembly for his name to be announced."

"What!" exploded Hydaspes. "You idiot! You half-wit! Why did you not inform me immediately? You knew that it was not a mere ambassador who had arrived but a king and, furthermore, the son of my recently deceased brother. It was I who secured him his place on the throne, and I love him as my own son."

"I was aware of all this, my lord," replied Hermonias, "but I was also aware of the paramount importance of gauging the right moment to announce him: this function demands more circumspection on the part of a chamberlain than any other. Pardon me therefore if, observing that you were in conference with the royal ladies, I forebore to interrupt their charming conversation."

"Let him come forward now at least," said the king, and, thus bidden, Hermonias scuttled off and returned immediately with his master's bidding: Meroebos strode into view. He was a striking example of young manhood, who had but recently passed the threshold of adulthood, his age being seven years and ten. Yet he stood taller than almost everyone there. A magnificent retinue of shield bearers escorted him, and the Ethiopian army in reverence and deference parted to let him pass through the circle of soldiers without obstruction. Nor did Hydaspes remain 24
seated on his throne, but he rose to greet Meroebos, whom he embraced with fatherly affection and seated next to himself.

Clasping his hand, he exclaimed: "You have come just in time, my boy, to join our victory festivities and to celebrate the rite of marriage. Our ancestral gods and heroes, founders of our race, have discovered a daughter for us and, it seems, a bride for you! I shall tell you the full tale later on, but now, if you wish me to hear any petition on behalf of the subjects of your kingdom, speak out."

At the mention of the word "bride" Meroebos flushed red from a mixture of joy and embarrassment, and even in his black skin he could not conceal the blush that suffused his countenance like a flame licking over soot.

After a moment's silence he replied: "Father, the other embassies here today will each present you with the choicest gifts their land produces to

crown your glorious victory. I, on the other hand, have thought it proper to give you something appropriate to your valor in war and of a kind with your heroic renown. Therefore I bring you a man who is a master without rival of the art of bloodletting on the field of battle and a champion without peer at wrestling and boxing in the dust of the arena."

So saying, he nodded his head as a sign for the man to come forward,
25 and he strode into full view and prostrated himself at Hydaspes' feet. So huge, so primordially titanic, was he that even as he knelt to kiss the king's knee he was almost as tall as those seated on elevated thrones. Without even waiting for the command, he threw off his clothes and stood stark naked, challenging all comers to combat with weapons or bare hands. But no one came forward to take up the challenge, though time and again the king had his herald urge them to do so.

"Then you will receive the appropriate prize from my hands," said Hydaspes, and ordered an enormous, fully mature elephant to be brought him. When the creature arrived, the man accepted it with pleasure, and the populace erupted into laughter, delighted by the king's jest, and consoled for what was in their eyes a humiliation by his satirical deflation of the fellow's conceit.

Next to be presented were the ambassadors of the Seres; the gift they brought consisted of two robes, one dyed crimson, the other of the purest white, woven from the gossamer webs spun by the spiders that
26 live in their land. The king graciously accepted these gifts and acceded to their request for the release of a number of men who had served long sentences in jail. Next came the ambassadors of the Wealthy Arabs[244] with their gift of incense leaves, cassia, cinnamon, and the other spices that scent the land of Arabia, each to the value of many talents: their delicious perfume pervaded the entire area. They were followed by the delegation of the Troglodytai, who presented ant gold[245] and a pair of griffins[246] harnessed with chains of gold. Next in line was the embassy of

244. Wealthy Arabia, Arabia Eudaimon, corresponds roughly to modern Aden. The Wealthy Arabs were the people who supplied spices to the Mediterranean civilizations. It was widely believed that the spices originated in Arabia, but in fact the Arabs shipped them from the Far East. It may be that Heliodoros identified the Arabs, who did not fight in the battle, with the inhabitants of the Land of Cinnamon, who fought but are missing from the list of embassies.

245. Gold supposedly extracted from the dust ejected from the ant heaps of a particular species of giant ant (Herodotos 3.102). These ants were usually located in India, but Heliodoros seems once more to be following the lead of Philostratos (*Life of Apollonios* 6.1) in transferring them to Ethiopia.

246. Griffins were originally conceived of as guardians of the gold of the Hyperboreans in the far north. However, gold-guarding griffins tended to be confused with gold-digging ants and were relocated accordingly.

the Blemmyes, with a crown they had woven of bows and snake-bone arrowheads.

"These are the gifts we bring you, sire," they said. "Their price may be less than those of other nations, but they proved their value beside the river against the Persians, as you can testify."

"Then they are more precious than the costliest of gifts," said Hydaspes, "for it is because of them that all these other presentations are now being made to me."

So saying, he gave them leave to make any request they chose. They asked for a reduction in their taxes, whereupon he waived payment altogether for a period of ten years.

Almost all the visiting embassies had been received: the king had 27
shown his gratitude for their gifts by presenting gifts of his own in return, in no case of less value than those he had received, in the majority of cases of rather more. The last envoys to come forward were those of the Auxomitai,[247] who were not subject to tribute but partners in a treaty of friendship. To convey their compliments on his recent successes they too brought various gifts, including a specimen of an unusual and bizarre kind of animal: in size it stood as tall as a camel, but its hide was marked with garish leopard spots. Its hindquarters and rear parts were squat and leonine, but its withers, forelegs, and chest were disproportionately taller than the rest of its anatomy. Notwithstanding the bulk of the rest of its body, its neck was as slender and elongated as the crop of a swan. In appearance its head was like a camel's, in size not quite twice that of a Libyan ostrich. Its eyes were rimmed with a black line like mascara and darted hither and thither with an expression of pompous disdain. Even its method of locomotion was unique, since it rolled from side to side like a ship at sea, in a manner quite unlike any other creature, terrestrial or aquatic: it did not advance each of its legs individually, in rotation, but its two right legs moved forward in unison, separately from the two left legs, which also functioned as a distinct pair, thus leaving each side of its body in turn without support. It was so halting in its gait and so docile in its temperament that its keeper could lead it on a slender cord wound around its neck, and it obeyed the directions of his will as if it were a chain that brooked no disobedience.

The arrival of this beast produced universal amazement. The people spontaneously invented a name for the creature derived from the most

247. The people of Axum, a city in the mountains of northern Ethiopia. Insignificant at the dramatic date of the novel, Axum had become a city of great importance by the time of Heliodoros, eclipsing the older power of Meroe. Some hint of this later importance may be intended in the exceptional status of Axum among Hydaspes' allies.

prominent features of its anatomy: *camelopard.*[248] But it threw the ceremony into total disarray.

28 What happened was this: at the altar of the Moon was standing a pair of bulls, at the altar of the Sun a team of four white horses, ready to be sacrificed. Their alarm at the sight of this strange and unfamiliar monster, whose like they had never seen before, was as great as if they had seen a ghost. Panic-stricken, one of the bulls (the only one, apparently, to have caught sight of the creature) and two of the horses jerked their halters out of their keepers' hands and bolted. There was no holding them. Unable to break through the ring of soldiers, whose locked shields formed a wall totally enclosing the central space, the animals careered blindly around, galloping and wheeling all over the enclosure and upending everything in their way, inanimate object and living creature alike. Uproar ensued, screams of fear from the people in the creatures' path mingling with cries of delight from others, who derived much mirth and merriment from seeing them collide with someone else and flatten anyone who got in their way. The noise was such that Persinna and Charikleia were unable to stay quietly in the pavilion but drew the curtain aside a little way so as to be able to see what was happening.

I cannot say whether what Theagenes did next was the product of his own innate courage or the inspiration of some god or other. Hitherto he had been kneeling at the altar, expecting the sacrificial blow to fall at any moment, but now, observing that the guards who flanked him had scattered in the general confusion, he suddenly leapt to his feet and, seizing one of the sticks that lay on the altars, grabbed hold of one of the horses that had not bolted and leapt onto its back. He grasped its mane, and, using the hair to steer it, he dug his heels like spurs into the horse's flank, whipped on his steed with his stick, and rode off in pursuit of the runaway bull. At first the onlookers assumed that Theagenes was attempting to escape, and each started shouting at his neighbor not to let him break through the cordon of soldiers. But as the exploit proceeded, they saw that they had been wrong, that this was no pusillanimous attempt to escape being sacrificed.

In a trice Theagenes had caught up with the bull, and for a while he rode just behind it, prodding it and goading it to run even faster; through all the twists and turns of its frantic career he stayed with it, cautiously
29 sidestepping its charges and rushes, until it had grown accustomed to the sight of him and what he was doing. Now he was riding alongside it, so close that flesh touched flesh, that the bull's breath and sweat mingled with the horse's. So precisely did he correlate the speed of the two racing

248. A giraffe, of course.

animals that from a distance the spectators were presented with the illusion that the creatures' two heads sprang from a single neck, and they acclaimed Theagenes as a hero who had brought so strange a team, a hippotaur, a creature half bull, half horse, beneath the yoke.

Such was the popular response, but Charikleia as she watched was seized with a fit of palpitations, for she was quite bewildered as to the purpose of this exploit and felt the pain of any injury to Theagenes, should an accident occur, as keenly as if it were her own life at stake. So great was her anguish that it even became apparent to Persinna, who said: "What is wrong, my child? Tell me, do. You seem to be facing the danger in proxy for the stranger. I am affected too: it is sad that he must die so young. But I pray that he will escape danger and be preserved for the sacrifice; otherwise our duty towards the gods will be completely neglected."

"How absurd," exclaimed Charikleia, "to pray that he is not killed in order to be killed! Mother, if you can, save this man's life. Do this as a favor to me."

Persinna did not realize the true motive for Charikleia's request: she took it for a mere infatuation.

"To save his life is out of the question," she said. "But I am your mother; you can confide in me. Tell me what connection you have with this man that makes you so anxious on his behalf. Even if it is some improper passion, something unworthy of your virginity, a mother's natural love can keep her daughter's lapse secret, a woman's fellow feeling can mask another woman's sin."

Charikleia wept long and bitterly. "This is my greatest misfortune," she said. "Even people of intelligence find my words unintelligible and are deaf when I speak of my misfortune. Now I am compelled to resort to an explicit and undisguised denunciation of myself."

So she spoke, only to find her resolve to reveal the truth frustrated for 30
a second time as the heavens resounded to an outburst of cheering from the crowd. Theagenes gave his steed its head: with its last ounce of speed it inched ahead till its chest was level with the bull's head. Then, leaving the horse to career along riderless, Theagenes leapt from its back and hurled himself onto the bull's neck. He planted his own face between its horns and locked his forearms like a crown around the animal's head, with his fingers knotted in a wrestling grip on its forehead, and allowed the rest of his body to hang suspended clear of the ground alongside the bull's right shoulder. For a moment or two he was borne along dangling like this, flung this way and that as the bull bucked and leapt. But when he felt the animal gasping for breath beneath his weight and its muscles losing their last degree of tautness, just as it passed the place where Hy-

daspes sat in state, he swung his feet round to the front so that they hung just ahead of the bull's legs, and kicked and hacked at its hooves until it tripped and stumbled. Its forward impetus obstructed, its strength broken by that of the young man, the bull's legs buckled at the knees, and suddenly it catapulted forward onto its head and turned a somersault to land on its back and shoulders. And there it stayed, flat on its back, with its horns stuck in the ground and so firmly rooted that its head could not move, while its legs flailed ineffectually and pawed the empty air in helpless rage at its defeat.[249]

Theagenes pressed home his victory, and, using only his left hand to pin the bull to the ground, he stretched his right hand heavenwards and waved and waved, beaming at Hydaspes and the assembled multitude. His smile was an invitation to share his joy, and the bellowing of the bull was like a trumpet call to sound his victory. The populace responded with a tumultuous ovation: no distinct words could they articulate to praise him, but they just opened their mouths and let the sound come straight from their vocal chords to give voice to their wonderment, which wafted heavenwards as their cheering continued for some length of time without any diminution of its volume.

At a word of command from the king, attendants leapt into action. Some lifted Theagenes to his feet and brought him to the king, while others looped a rope around the bull's horns and dragged it crestfallen back to the altar, where they tethered it, along with the horse, which they had also recaptured. Hydaspes was on the point of speaking to Theagenes and of dealing with him when he was interrupted by the populace: they were delighted with the young man, with whom they had sympathized from the moment they first saw him; they were impressed by his strength, but, more important, they were still smarting with resentment against Meroebos' Ethiopian champion.

"Let him be matched against Meroebos' man!" they all yelled with one accord. "Let us have a contest between the winner of the elephant and the captor of the bull!" they chanted.

Eventually Hydaspes acceded to their demands, and the Ethiopian was brought into the center of the circle, glaring around him with arrogant disdain and with a swagger in his step as he strutted along, swinging his forearms across his body, so that his crooked elbows jutted out first one
31 side, then the other. As he approached the place where the king and his cabinet were sitting, Hydaspes turned to Theagenes and said in Greek: "Stranger, this is the fellow you must fight. The people command it."

249. This description of the technique of bull throwing (*taurokathapsia*) accords fairly closely with that found in other references to the sport. It was practiced particularly in Thessaly, which is Theagenes' home.

"Let their will be done," replied Theagenes. "But what form will the contest take?"

"Wrestling," said Hydaspes.

To which Theagenes replied: "Why not armed combat with swords? Then I might strike some blow—or receive one—that would jolt Charikleia out of her complacency, for till now she has resisted the temptation to speak the truth about us or else, most probably, has forgotten about me altogether."

"Your purpose in dropping Charikleia's name into this conversation," said Hydaspes, "you alone know. Be that as it may, you must wrestle and not spar with swords. The sight of spilt blood is forbidden before the moment of sacrifice."

Theagenes realized that Hydaspes was afraid he might be killed before the sacrifice, and said: "You are right to preserve me for the gods. They will take care of us."

And so saying, he took a handful of dust and sprinkled it over his shoulders and forearms, which were still dripping with perspiration from the bull chase. Then, shaking off what had not adhered to him, he put up his guard, planted his feet in a firm stance, flexed his knees, hunched his shoulders and the broad of his back, lowered his head a little, tensed every muscle in his body, and stood in impatient anticipation of the grips and holds of a wrestling bout. The Ethiopian glared at him and smirked; he shook his head sarcastically to make clear his low estimation of his opponent. Suddenly he darted forward and brought his forearm crashing down like a sledgehammer onto Theagenes' neck. The sound of the blow reverberated, and the Ethiopian resumed his posturing and broke into arrogant laughter.

Theagenes, who was a lifelong devotee of the gymnasium and athletic endeavor and a past master in the art of combat whose patron god is Hermes,[250] decided to give ground to start with: he had already experienced the power of his opponent and was resolved not to come to grips with such a monstrous hulk of a man in the full spate of his bestial fury, but rather to use skill to outwit brute force. So, although he was only slightly dazed by the blow, he feigned to be worse affected than in fact he was, and offered the other side of his neck to be struck. The Ethiopian delivered another blow, but Theagenes rolled with the punch and pretended nearly to fall flat on his face.

The Ethiopian thought him beaten and was confident of victory. As 32
he advanced to strike the third blow, he dropped his guard. He had

250. Hermes was the god of the gymnasium and particularly of the wrestling arena. In this aspect his cult title was Enagonios, god of combat, to which Heliodoros has contrived an allusion in the previous phrase.

raised his forearm again and was on the point of swinging it down, when suddenly Theagenes ducked to evade the swing and closed with his adversary; with his own right forearm he pushed back the Ethiopian's left arm, thus unbalancing his antagonist, who was also drawn groundwards by the swing of his own arm as it descended into empty space. Theagenes came up beneath his armpit and leaped onto his back.[251] With some difficulty he got his arms around the Ethiopian's enormous stomach and with his heels kicked and hacked at his ankles with all his might, not ceasing until he had prized his feet off the ground and forced him to his knees. Then, straddling his opponent, he forced his thighs apart with his legs, knocked away the Ethiopian's wrists, which were taking the weight of his body and holding his torso clear of the ground, knotted his arms around his head, and wrenched them backwards towards his back and shoulders, so sending him sprawling on his belly on the ground.

At this, with one voice, the people erupted into a clamor even more deafening than before. Even the king could not restrain himself: he leapt from his throne crying, "O Destiny, what a man the law obliges us to sacrifice!"

Then he called Theagenes to him and said: "Young man, the traditional crown of sacrifice already awaits you, but now receive another crown to mark your glorious victory—though it will last but a moment and profit you nothing. Much as I wish to, I am powerless to reprieve you from the end that now awaits you, but I shall grant you such reward as I am permitted. If you know of anything that could give you pleasure while yet you live, ask it."

With these words he set a crown of gold set with precious stones on Theagenes' head, and as he did so, he could not hide his tears.

"I do have a request," replied Theagenes, "which I ask you to grant as you have promised. If it is quite beyond your power to grant me a reprieve from sacrifice, at least bid it be done by the hand of your newly discovered daughter!"

33 These words stung Hydaspes, and he was reminded of the selfsame request made by Charikleia. However, he did not think he could halt the ceremony at so critical a juncture to resolve this mystery.

"My friend," he said, "I gave you leave to ask and pledged myself to give only what it is possible to give. She who wields the sacrificial knife must be a married woman, not a virgin. The law demands it."

"But she does have a husband!" answered Theagenes.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Hydaspes. "You talk like someone whose

251. The maneuver Heliodoros proceeds to describe is an authentic wrestling ploy known as the *klimakismos,* "ladder hold."

mind is wandering in the face of death, which is just what you are! The gridiron has proved that the girl has no experience of marriage or a man's intercourse—unless by her husband you mean Meroebos here, though I have no notion how you know! But he is not yet her husband; the only title he has received from me is that of husband to be—"

"Finish your sentence," interrupted Theagenes, "by saying he never will be her husband, not if I know anything of Charikleia's heart. And you will have to believe my predictions, for I am a sacrificial victim!"

"It is not while victims are alive that they can foretell the future, my friend," interposed Meroebos, "but when they have been slaughtered and cut open so that soothsayers can read the signs in their entrails! So you were quite right, Father, to say that the stranger is talking nonsense because his mind is wandering in the face of death. Now, if such be your command, let him be taken to the altars. Do whatever business you have left to do, and proceed with the ceremony."

Theagenes was led back to the appointed place, and Charikleia, whose spirits had revived a little at his victory, found her optimistic hopes dashed and began to weep as he was led away again. Persinna made every effort to console her and said, "The young man could probably be saved if only you could bring yourself to tell me more plainly what you have so far left unsaid about yourself."

Charikleia had no alternative. She could see that the situation was such that she could put it off no longer, and so she proceeded straight to the heart of her tale.

Hydaspes meanwhile was asking his chamberlain whether any of the 34
embassies had not yet been given an audience.

"Only those from Syene, sire," replied Hermonias. "They arrived but a moment or two ago and bear a letter and gifts of friendship from Oroondates."

"Let them be presented then," said Hydaspes, and the ambassadors came forward and handed him the letter, which he opened and read. This is what it said:

> Oroondates, satrap of the Great King, to Hydaspes, gracious and blessed king of the Ethiopians.
>
> You have shown yourself my superior in battle, and even more so in wisdom. Unprompted, you relinquished an entire satrapy to me: I anticipate therefore that you will not refuse me one further small request now. A certain girl was on her way to me from Memphis when she was caught up in the war. Those who were with her and escaped danger on that occasion have told me that she was captured and, on your orders, sent to Ethiopia. This person I

petition you to release and to make me a present of her. I ask this partly because I am myself attracted to the child, but mainly because I wish to restore her to her father. He has wandered the face of the earth and in the course of his search for his child was interned in the garrison town of Elephantine after the outbreak of war. I came across him there afterward, when I was inspecting my surviving troops, and he asked to be given a passage to Your Gracious Majesty. He stands before you now, among the other ambassadors: his manners are sufficient indication of his breeding; his appearance, sufficient claim on your compassion. Send him back to me in joy, sire, a father in fact, not merely in name.

When he had finished reading, Hydaspes asked, "Which of you is it who is looking for his daughter?"

They pointed to an old man, and the king said: "My friend, there is nothing I would not do to oblige Oroondates. But I had only ten young female captives brought here. One of these, we have just discovered, is not your daughter. Still, have a look at the others and if you find her, say who she is, and she will be yours."

The old man prostrated himself before the king and kissed his feet. The girls were brought, and he looked at them; but when he did not find the child he sought, his gloom returned.

"She is not one of these, sire," he said.

"You have my sympathy," replied Hydaspes. "If you cannot find the child you seek, you must blame fate. I give you permission to look around and satisfy yourself that no girl was brought here apart from these and that there are no others in the camp."

35 The old man smote his brow and wept. Then, raising his head, he ran his eyes all around the assembly. Suddenly he darted forward like a lunatic, ran to the altar, and, looping the hem of the threadbare cloak[252] in which he was clad into a noose, he threw it around Theagenes' neck[253] and started to drag him away from the altar, yelling at the top of his voice: "You are mine now, you villain! You are mine now, you accursed scoundrel!"

Try as the guard might to restrain him and to release Theagenes from his clutches, the old man refused to let go and clung so tight to Theagenes that they seemed inseparable. Finally, he suceeded in bringing him before Hydaspes and the council.

252. The man is wearing a *tribonion,* a cloak of rough material worn by the poor and those who affected asceticism. Here it is worn to arouse pity.

253. This peculiar action can be paralleled as a form of citizen's arrest, and the words that the old man speaks also echo a legal formula.

"Sire," he said "this is the man who kidnapped my daughter. This is the man who left my home desolate and childless, who stole my soul from the very heart of Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi; and now here he is, seated at the gods' altars as if he bore no stain of guilt."

This incident gave rise to general consternation: the few who could understand his words were no more astounded by what he said than were the rest by what they saw.

Pressed by Hydaspes to explain more clearly what he meant, the old 36
man (who was none other than Charikles) suppressed the full truth of Charikleia's origins, for he had no wish to attract the hostility of her true parents if she had in fact disappeared during her flight southwards before ever reaching Meroe. So he simply summarized the harmless parts of her story and said: "I had a daughter, sire. Her intelligence and beauty were such that any description would seem incredible unless you had seen her with your own eyes. She lived a virgin life as acolyte of Artemis at Delphi, until this paragon, a Thessalian who came to my city of Delphi as the leader of a sacred mission to perform some ancestral rite, stole her slyly away and looted the holy shrine of Apollo. And so you might with justice consider yourselves the victims of his sacrilege, for he has desecrated the person and the holy precinct of Apollo, who is one and the same as the Sun, the god of your fathers. His accomplice in this act of sin was a charlatan priest from Memphis. I scoured Thessaly and demanded his extradition by the people of Oita, his fellow citizens, but he was nowhere to be found. However, they disowned this fellow here as one polluted by sin and gave me a free hand to put him to the sword, wherever he was to be found. Surmising that the goal of their flight was Memphis, Kalasiris's hometown, I made my way there, only to find Kalasiris already dead, as he so richly deserved. However, his son Thyamis told me everything there was to tell about my daughter, including the fact that she had been dispatched to Oroondates at Syene. But though I went to Syene, I was unable to reach Oroondates or to enter the town, and was overtaken by the war in Elephantine.

"Now I have come to you and kneel before you in supplication, just as the letter has explained. You have the abductor; now take up the search for my daughter. Your charity to me, a man who has suffered much, will also give you the satisfaction of demonstrating your regard for the satrap who is treating with you on my behalf."

His voice trailed away into silence, and he sobbed bitterly at his story. 37
Hydaspes turned to Theagenes and said, "What do you have to say to these accusations?"

"They are all true," he answered. "I am a thief, a robber, a vicious criminal to him, but to you I have done good service."

"Give him back his daughter then," said Hydaspes. "She is his property, not yours. As you have already been consecrated to the gods, you will die the honorable death of sacrifice, not the judicial death of just execution."

"It is not the man who committed the crime," said Theagenes, "but the man who has the proceeds of the crime in his possession who should do the giving back. That man is you! Give her back then, unless this man too will admit that Charikleia is *your* daughter!"

Nobody could restrain himself now: there was pandemonium. From the very start all the words and actions had made sense to Sisimithres, but he had resisted the impulse to intervene, waiting for the gods to bring their revelation to the fullness of its clarity. Now he ran to Charikles and embraced him.

"The child you regarded as your daughter, the child I committed to your keeping all those years ago, is safe," he exclaimed, "though in truth she is, and has been discovered to be, the child of parents whose identity you know!"

38 Now Charikleia came running from the pavilion and, oblivious of the modesty incumbent on her sex and years, raced like a maenad in her madness towards Charikles and fell at his feet.

"Father," she said, "to you I owe as much reverence as to those who gave me birth. I am a wicked parricide; punish me as you please; ignore any attempts to excuse my misdeeds by ascribing them to the will of the gods, to their governance of human life!"

A few feet away, Persinna held Hydaspes in her arms. "It is all true, my husband," she said. "You need have no doubts. Understand now that this young Greek is truly to be our daughter's husband. She has just confessed as much to me, though it cost her much pain."

The populace cheered and danced for joy where they stood, and there was no discordant voice as young and old, rich and poor, united in jubilation, for though they had understood very little of what was said, they were able to surmise the facts of the matter from what had already transpired concerning Charikleia; or else perhaps they had been brought to a realization of the truth by the same divine force that had staged this whole drama and that now produced a perfect harmony of diametric opposites: joy and sorrow combined; tears mingled with laughter; the most hideous horror transformed to celebration; those who wept also laughed; those who grieved also rejoiced; they found those whom they had not sought and lost those whom they thought to have found; and finally the offering of human blood, which all had expected to see, was transformed
39 into a sacrifice free of all stain, for Hydaspes turned to Sisimithres and said: "What are we to do, all-wise one? To refuse the gods their due

sacrifice would be irreverent; to put those who are the gods' gifts to the knife would be sacrilegious. We must consider carefully what to do."

"Sire," replied Sisimithres, speaking Greek no longer, but Ethiopian for the whole assembly to understand, "it seems that a surfeit of joy can cloud even the most intelligent of minds. You ought to have realized long ago that the gods have no desire for the sacrifice you are making ready to offer: first, on the very altar of sacrifice, they revealed the blessed lady Charikleia to be your daughter and dramatically transported her foster father here from the heart of Greece; then they cast fright and panic among the sacrificial bulls and horses and so gave a sign that those sacrifices that are thought superior would also be cut short; and now, to make our happiness complete, as a theatrical climax they have revealed that this young stranger is betrothed to the maiden. Let us not be blind to the miracles the gods have wrought; let us not thwart their purpose; let us abolish human sacrifice forevermore and hold to purer forms of offering!"

Sisimithres proclaimed this loud and clear for all to hear. Now Hy- 40
daspes too spoke in the native tongue. Laying his hands on Charikleia and Theagenes, he said, "My people, these things have been brought to pass by the gods' will: we must not oppose them. So now, calling to witness both the gods who have spun the thread of this destiny, and you whose obedience to their decrees is amply proven, I declare that this couple has been joined by the laws of matrimony, and I give them leave to pass their lives together in accordance with god's ordinance for the bearing of children. With your permission, let us make our sacrifice to confirm this decision; let us turn our minds to the gods' service."

The army cheered their approval of this speech and clapped their 41
hands in thunderous applause, as if the marriage were being solemnized then and there. Hydaspes stepped to the altar and, before making the first offering, said, "Our Lord the Sun, the Moon our Lady, since by your decrees Theagenes and Charikleia are proclaimed man and wife, they now have the right to serve in your priesthood."

And so saying, he removed his miter, the insignia of the priesthood, from his own head, and Persinna's from hers, and placed his own on Theagenes, Persinna's on Charikleia. And thereupon Charikleia recalled to mind the oracle at Delphi and found the prophecy that the gods had given long ago fulfilled in fact: it had said that the young pair would flee from Delphi and

To the black land of the Sun will they travel,
Where they will reap the reward of those whose lives are passed in virtue:
A crown of white on brows of black.

And so, Theagenes and Charikleia, crowned with their white miters, invested with holy office, offered the sacrifice with their own hands, and the omens were good. Then, by the light of torches, to the melody of flute and pipe, they rode into Meroe, Theagenes beside Hydaspes in a chariot drawn by horses, Sisimithres in a second beside Charikles, Charikleia with Persinna in a carriage pulled by white oxen. The people cheered and clapped and danced as they escorted them into the city, where the more mystic parts of the wedding ritual were to be performed with greater magnificence.

So concludes the *Aithiopika*, the story of Theagenes and Charikleia, the work of a Phoenician from the city of Emesa, one of the clan of Descendants of the Sun, Theodosios's son, Heliodoros.